

Deconstructing Atheism and Analyzing Atheism's Claims

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I. DECONSTRUCTING ATHEISM

Modern atheism has landmarked science as its inception. Historically, Islam has never clashed with science; because Islam, specifically rational Sunni theology, gives rational judgements importance; while science, on the other hand, falls under experimentation or habit. Experimentation and habit would be categorized by the rational judgements and not conversely—no experiment or empiric fact can contradict rational judgements.

The full title of this essay is: **‘Deconstructing Atheism and Analyzing Atheism’s Claims.’** This essay aims to dismantle one of the claims of atheism as made in books by Richard Dawkin which are frequently distributed in universities freely. Many years ago, I read ‘The God Delusion.’ Dawkins claims that the foundations of religion are based upon superstition, but interestingly enough, when we recite the Qur’an, we read: **“Know, that there is no deity except Allah” [47:19]**. So, the foundation of believing is built upon knowledge [*ilm*]. Another example of this is the verse: **“In order that you know that Allah is upon all things able” [65:12]**. The order given in the Qur’an is ‘to know’; therefore, the foundation of belief is based upon knowledge.

On the other hand, superstition is defined as excessively credulous belief in and reverence for the supernatural. Credulous, meaning the disposition to believe with insufficient evidence. This is the atheist claim and when we say ‘deconstructing atheism’, we must first deconstruct this claim of the atheist.

1.1 Evidences

The Qur’an states: **“Do not follow that which you have no knowledge of” [17:36]**. There are two types of evidences for knowledge based upon fact: rational evidences [*‘aqila*] and transmitted evidences [*naqila*].

Theists claim that God or the Designer of the universe has endowed creation with the rational faculty. Therefore, when we talk from evidence, the first source would be the rational faculty: the mind.

The second would be transmission depending on which faith group an individual belongs to. Some may believe in transmission of the Bible; others may believe in the transmission of another religious text. Muslims, however, believe in the transmission of the Qur’an, as well as sayings and actions of **Prophet Muhammad *salla Allah alayhi wa sallam***.

What makes Islam unique is that we claim that the authority of transmission is based upon the authority of the intellect. So, the intellect is what makes someone believe in a Divine Creator, and based upon this is the foundation of '**There is no God except Allah and Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah.**' Once a person accepts this, then transmission is used as a source. Hence, if we discuss with an atheist, we do not quote the Qur'an to them first, rather, we discuss the rational existence of a Creator.

1.2 The forms of rational evidences

Rational evidence is divided into many forms which the Arabs termed *Taqsim al-Qiyas*.

The first is proof [*burhan*] which is made from propositions that are certain—this would be a rational evidence.

As well as this, we have other forms of rational evidence like argument [*jadl*], which is an assumption used for a basis of discussion. For example, if you say to a Hindu that slaughtering of an animal is despicable, they would accept it but others may not accept this as a logical argument.

Then we have rhetoric [*khatab*] which is oratory skills. Someone may be able to convince you of an argument merely with their oratory skills.

In addition, we have poetical discourse, or poetical language [*shi`r*] which may be able to convince some people.

Finally, the fifth type is deceitfulness/sophism [*sufasta'iyya*]. In Arabic, the word for sophism is *sufastaiyya* which is derived from *Sufa*, meaning wisdom, and *Asta'*, meaning to confuse someone. So, a specious argument apparently good or right, though lacking merit.

Muslim theologians only use the first type: *proof*. This is the sole foundation of accepting the existence of God. None of the other forms are used. Argumentation or assumptions are not used to convince someone. The third would be oratory skills which may differ from person-to-person. A person with superior oratory skills may be able to convince someone of an argument which is specious in its foundations; for example, Hitler employed his unmatched oratory skills in Weimar Germany to convince the masses. Similarly, the fourth, being poetry, is also not used as a source of evidence. And the fifth, sophism, is not considered when dialoguing with an atheist or with anyone else for that matter.

1.3 The types of proofs

Proof [*burhan*] is divided into many types, the first of which is basic principles and fundamentals [*awwaliyat*]. For instance, the whole is larger than the part, or if we were to say one is half of two—these are basic principles and fundamental rules accepted by everyone.

Another type is empirical [*mushahadat*]; something which is observed. For example, fire burns—this is accepted as fire burning can be observed.

The third type is assertoric statements [*qadaya*], like stating that four is a pair composed of two and two. Remember that assertoric statements must be composed of valid propositions.

Fourth is experimentation [*tajriba*]. Science claims truth from this aspect; for example, it is said that paracetamol gets rid of a headache, and this is something tried and tested as people have taken paracetamol and it removes a headache for them.

The fifth type of proof is intuition [*hadas*]: an immediate inference from data presented. We know many things intuitively, something known without thinking [*fikr*]. An individual would know the weather is cold through intuition when the weather is cold.

The final type of proof is mass transmission [*mutawatirat*] which in some aspects may be unique to Muslims. A famous example is that Einstein discovered the Theory of Relativity—this is known through mass transmission.

These proofs are the foundation with which we debate someone. We cannot debate someone if they base an argument on a fallacy. For example, fallacies being argumentation [*jadal*]; something which is widely accepted by Muslims may not be widely accepted by others. For instance, when we say angels exist, we accept this, but an atheist would not accept this and would state that it is based upon superstition. Therefore, the foundation of debate is proof [*burhan*] which includes the six types mentioned above.

Any types of argumentation would impart either of the following five; knowledge or certainty [*ilm*], belief [*i`tiqad*], assumption [*dhann*], uncertainty [*shakk*], and illusion [*wahm*]. Theologians state belief in a creator is based upon the first, knowledge or certainty, to the extent that in the books of theology there is a famous debate amongst theologians: if an individual has belief not based upon knowledge, is his faith valid or not? There is a group of theologians who state that his faith is invalid. Furthermore, if a person is a muqallid in faith, meaning blindly following in faith such that the person he/she blind follows changes belief resulting in the blind follower also changing belief—this type of faith is invalid.

When discussing with an atheist, it is important that it is highlighted that our faith is based upon knowledge. If faith is not based upon knowledge, it falls into the category of belief which is disputed between our Sunni theologians as to whether it is valid or not. Any faith built upon assumption, uncertainty or illusion is invalid too.

Similarly, when discussing scientific points with an atheist, we must ask them: do the scientific points impart knowledge, belief, assumption, uncertainty, or illusion? Our faith is built upon knowledge, therefore, in order to counter our faith, the facts that are presented must also be knowledge. They cannot be assumptions, uncertainty or illusions. Consequently, if someone brings forth the Theory of Evolution as proof, then it must impart certain knowledge. It cannot impart any of the others because if it does, then it counters our faith which is based upon certain knowledge.

1.4 Deduction

Deduction is inference made by observation. There are three types of deduction.

The **first** type is observation of cause and effect. An example of this is fire burning. Fire is the cause and the burning is the effect.

The **second** type is effect on cause, like burning leading to fire. If an individual observes something burning, it can be deduced that the burning is being caused by fire.

Finally, the **third** type is one cause and two effects. For instance, if a cauldron of water is on a fire, and the water is boiling, it can be deduced that the effect of fire on water is boiling and heating.

Cause and effect would impart certain knowledge because this is based upon basic principles, empirical knowledge, mass transmission, experimentation, and also intuition. Now, simple observations of the universe are everything that does not have existence itself, its existence is from something else; whatever was not and then came into existence has a cause; and finally, everything temporal, contingent and dependent is caused by something. The meaning of contingent according to Muslim theologians is existence after nonexistence. These are three simple observable facts. When someone presents science, we would ask which one of these basic premises does science refute and what type of knowledge does science impart by refuting these basic intuitive facts.

1.5 atheistic deterrence

What is commonly mentioned to deter people from knowledge of a creator are words like God, Jesus, Bible, priest, organised religion, Church, Pope, Jihad, Holy War, and Sharī'a. These are ad-homonym attacks upon the very belief of a creator. These distract from the real issue which is a cause, ultimate power, agent, omnipotent, force, creator, and designer. These are two different facts. If a person rejects organised religion, or rejects Jesus, or rejects the Bible or Qur'an, this does not do away with the basic point that there is an ultimate cause for the universe; an agent; an omnipotent entity; a force; a creator; a designer.

In conversation with an atheist, it is common that they quote Qur'anic verses; for instance, what is commonly quoted today is killing and violence in the Qur'an. But the question to the atheist would be why would killing and violence be wrong for someone who does not believe in a creator? What is the moral judgement for killing and violence being wrong?

1.5 The kalam cosmological argument

A commonly presented argument is what we known as the Kalam, cosmological argument. Now, certain Christians have latched on to this argument, but they acknowledge the fact that this argument was developed by Muslim theologians; therefore, the title remains as that Kalam cosmological argument.

The argument is based upon simple facts; everything that has a beginning has a cause; the Universe began to exist which is something observable as the expansion of the universe is observable. By observing the Universe expanding—proven by thermodynamics—we know that the Universe has a beginning and a cause: the cause is the originator.

Based upon the fact that the Universe began to exist; the Universe has a cause because everything that has a beginning has a cause and the cause is the originator, the one who brought the universe into existence.

This is also based upon the fact that it is impossible for the formation of an actual infinite by addition—this is a logical absurdity. In the same way, a contingent infinite cannot exist. Something which in itself cannot be infinite.

Yet the question arises: how is the Universe contingent? When we observe the Universe, the observable Universe shows us that parts of the Universe come into existence and go out of existence. If parts of the Universe are contingent, this in effect would mean that the

entire universe is also contingent. Otherwise, it would be said that the eternal universe is composed of parts which are contingent and the eternal universe is dependent upon contingent parts. Otherwise, the alternative to this argument would be it sprang into existence wholly and caused out of nothing a finite number of years ago.

The objections to the Kalam cosmological argument are two.

Firstly, events have a cause, but it is not necessary for events to have a cause. This objection goes against rational reasoning, against basic principles of proof [*burhan*] called fundamentals [*awwaliyat*] and intuition [*hadas*]. We know everything around us has a cause. Bertrand Russell—when debating Copplestone on BBC Radio many years ago— refused to acknowledge these terms. When Copplestone mentioned the contingency of the Universe, Russell denied the terms saying ‘we just believe that the Universe is there and does not need to have a cause.’ By denying terms and basics of the human rational faculty, an atheist would attempt to get away with this argument.

Secondly, explanations from outside the Universe. Paul Davis and others have mentioned that why do we need to have an explanation from outside of the Universe? Why cannot the Universe explain itself? The reason for this is that it would lead to another logical absurdity which is known as circular reasoning [*dawr*]. What caused God? If you say God is the uncaused causer, what brought God into existence? This would lead to continuous regression [*tasalsul*]. But what are these two concepts known as continuous regression and circular reasoning? Continuous regression would mean that if we say that the Universe is contingent but it was caused by, for instance, an alien life form, the question would arise: what caused that alien life form? The answer would be another alien life form. The same question would arise again: what caused the other alien life form? The answer would be another alien life form. This would lead to continuous regression. In the same way, there is circular reasoning. For example, A caused B, and B caused A. By taking this circular reasoning, we notice that the existence of A depends on B, and likewise, the existence of B depends on A. The logical absurdity in this reasoning is apparent; it would be necessary that both entities A and B precede each other, as well as come into existence after one another—both propositions are contradictory and thus, illogical. This is why these objections that explanations from outside of the Universe are not being logical. It is illogical to say that the Universe has caused itself because it would lead to circular reasoning; we, therefore, would say that every contingent thing in the Universe is caused by something which is self-subsistent and self-existing. This self-existing cause of the Universe is what we term as the creator or the designer of the Universe.

Science has recently made headway in attempting to answer this. We know Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow wrote a book entitled ‘The Grand Design’ in which it is stated: “Because there is a law of gravity, the Universe can and will create itself out of nothing.” This leads to circular reasoning, again, because a law of nature depends for its own existence on the prior existence of the nature which is described. How can you have the law of nature such as gravity prior to the existence of anything? Another quotation

from Stephen Hawking, after removing the mathematical mist, is: “M-Theory predicts that a great many universes were created out of nothing. Their creation does not require the intervention of some supernatural being or God. Rather, these multiple universes arise naturally from physical law.” If physical law gave these universes existence, this again would lead to circular reasoning: how can we have physical law prior to the order of nature?

1.6 Six numbers

Roger Penrose, a scientist, who stated regarding the chance of existence of this Universe; he said in his book, *The Emperor's New Mind*, the chance of the existence of the Universe is 1 in 10^{123} . This would render a number too large to be written down in full, even if all the protons in the entire universe were used to write a digit on. We would ask what is the existence of this universe based upon? Is it chance, necessity or upon the originator of the universe?

When we have something called the design argument—which is used by scholars such as **Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani** (رحمه الله) and many others—that would mean that the universe is finely tuned and designed. For instance, pure mathematics applies exactly to the universe and physical elements behave in periodic regularity, mathematically quantifiable and closely correlated ways captured by pure mathematical formulae. The observable universe fits mathematically including physical elements, those elements are in accordance with mathematics. Is this by chance? We would say this is not by chance. Six numbers that finely tune the universe is a reference to a book written by Martin Reese known as *Just Six Numbers*.

First is η , he states the cosmos is so vast because there is one crucially important huge number in nature equal to 1×10^{42} , this number measures the strength of the electrical forces that hold atoms together divided by the force of gravity between them. If it were any smaller, only a short-lived miniature universe could exist. No creatures could grow larger than insects and there would be no time for biological evolution.

Another number ϵ , whose value is 0.007, defines how firmly atomic nuclei bind together and how all the atoms on Earth were made. Its value controls the power from the sun and more, and more sensitively how stars transmute hydrogen into all the elements in the periodic table. Carbon and Oxygen are common while gold and uranium are rare because of what happens in the stars. If this number were 0.006 or 0.008, then we could not exist.

In the same way, Ω measures the amount of material in our universe. Galaxies diffuse gas and dark matter. Ω tells us the relative importance of gravity and expansion energy

in the universe. If this ratio was too high relative to a particular critical value, then the universe would have collapsed long ago. Had it been too low, no galaxies nor stars would have been formed. The initial expansion speed seems to be finely tuned.

Furthermore, he states measuring the fourth number, λ , was the biggest scientific news of 1998. An unsuspected new force, cosmic, anti-gravity controls the expansion of our universe. Even though, it has no discernible effect on scales less than a billion light years. It is destined to become ever more dominant over gravity and other forces as our universe becomes ever darker and emptier. Fortunately for us and very surprisingly to theorists, λ is very small, otherwise, its effect would have stopped galaxies and stopped stars from forming and cosmic evolution would have been stifled before it could even begin.

He states regarding Q, the sieve for all cosmic structures, stars, galaxies and clusters of galaxies were all imprinted in the Big Bang, the fabric of our universe depends on the number Q, which represents the ratio of two fundamental energies and is roughly 1/100,000 in value. If Q were even smaller, the universe would be inert and structureless, and conversely, if Q were much larger, the universe would be a violent place in which no stars or solar systems could survive; dominated by vast black holes.

The sixth crucial number has been known for centuries, although it is now viewed in a new perspective. It is the number of spatial dimensions in our world. D equals 3. Life could not exist if D were 2 or 4. Time is a fourth dimension but distinctively different from the others.

He states: "Perhaps there are some connections between these numbers." He states further down: "These six numbers constitute a recipe for the universe. Moreover, the outcome is sensitive to their values. If any one of them were to become untuned, there would be no stars and no life. Is this tuning a coincidence or is it the providence of a divine creator? I take the view that it is neither."⁵ He rejects a creator in the end but the Muslim theologians have been using this argument for many years that the universe that we live in is a finely tuned universe. Crick who took part in discovering the structure of DNA was atheist but believed that it was possible that millions of years ago, aliens came and placed life on Earth!

Richard Dawkins is on record for stating that belief in an alien life form that placed life on Earth is a possibility which is difficult to disprove. He did not say he holds this opinion but we know Crick held this position. The question here would be that alien life form would also have been created by another alien life form. This would lead to continuous regression. Richard Dawkins would have to admit that continuous regression is a logical absurdity and superstition. The belief in an originator is not based upon superstition. It is based upon rational reasoning. However, Richard Dawkins, himself, has fallen into the same thing which he proposes regarding religion which is that it is difficult to refute that an alien life form came on Earth and placed early organisms on Earth which developed through the theory of evolution and thus we have humanity on Earth today along with other creatures.

Richard Dawkin's book titled, *The Blind Watchmaker*, is a reference to William Pailey's argument regarding a watch. If someone is walking and they find a watch; is the watch designed or is the watch there by chance? He states in this book that, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." Therefore, even Richard Dawkins would admit, when observing biological organisms, the observations would lead one to think that these biological organisms have been designed. Yet, elsewhere, he states that it is plausible that an alien life form could have come on Earth and placed the early forms of life on Earth.

Design is inferred when parts appear arranged to fulfil a function. The more parts, the more sophistication, the stronger the conclusion of design. We are rationally justified that life is purposefully designed by an intelligent agent. This is from observation in Biology.

1.7 The evolution guise

When we say integrated and irreducible complexity, we mean that organisms are so complex that if one complex function of those organisms is removed, the organism would not be able to survive. This refutes the theory of evolution which states that organisms take incremental steps to develop from a very basic stage to a very complex organism. Irreducible complexity would mean if a single complex function is removed, the organism would become defunct. This is a famous example of bacterial flagellum which is a whip like structure which is composed of three things: paddle, rota and motor. This is an example given by some creationist scientists that this is irreducibly complex. If you were to remove a paddle, a rota or a motor from this bacterial flagellum, this would become defunct. This is what we mean by irreducibly complex. If we were to gather everything which is irreducibly complex and apply the theory of evolution, the theory of evolution would fall apart.⁶

A question for evolutionist would be why would evolution be driven to greater and greater complexity and result in intelligence? We are the result of evolution according to evolutionists and we are intelligent. Atheists would claim they are the acme of intelligence. Another important point when looking at this is the lack of quantitative details, estimation based on a proposed intermediate. What we mean by that is, in every other case of evolution, the evolutionist would propose an intermediate form which is not quantitative in its details and is based upon estimation. We have simple questions. Firstly, evolution cannot account for the origins of life.

The two main foundations for evolution would be natural selection and random mutation. These two are not a sufficient explanation for the origins of life. In the same way, pre-biotic fluid where supposedly amino-acids became proteins; those proteins became cells and those cells became more structured organisms. This is the proposition of the theory

of evolution. Without an abiotic accumulation of the building blocks of the cell, no life could ever evolve. Has pre-biotic fluid ever been proven by the theory of evolution? Has any evidence been found for pre-biotic fluid? Therefore, there is no empirical evidence, whatsoever and hence, origins of life and pre-biotic fluid would be a part of illusion, even if my life depended upon it.

Moreover, we are told the fossil record proves the theory of evolution. Richard Dawkin and Stephen Hawking are the new clergy for the western hemisphere. In the middle ages, you had the clergy of the Church. Whenever the priest told you to believe something, you believe it. In Islam, we never had blind-following in faith. We do not blind-follow the clergy. There is no blind faith. As we discussed, belief is based upon knowledge. This does not mean everyone needs to be trained in philosophy, theology and science. It means that person is convinced of his beliefs according to his level of knowledge and according to his mental capacity.

Evolutionary biologists would want us to believe that the fossil record supports the theory of evolution. Yet we have things like the Cambrian explosion over five hundred million years ago where we find complex organisms. Organisms that were fully formed. Prior to this, the creatures that are found are small organisms. Evolutionists would want us to blindly follow them in to believing that the Cambrian period was formed by organisms existing prior, but there is no real evidence for this. In fact, Richard Dawkins states in *The Blind Watchmaker*, "The Cambrian strata are the oldest ones in which we find most of the major invertebrate groups and we find many of them, already in an advanced state of evolution. The very first time they appear, it is as though, they were just planted there without any evolutionary history [...]"

When observing this fossil record, it is as if they just came without any evolutionary history. The fossil record itself is something which needs to be looked at. They present the example of the horse which starts off as a small horse which gradually becomes larger. This is known as small incremental steps where evolution occurs in a small gradual process which takes millions and millions of years. Yet the Cambrian explosion occurred over five hundred million years ago during a very small moment of time. The time is not sufficient to allow complex organisms to evolve all of a sudden. This is an enigma which the scientists have attempted to answer. Incremental steps would mean organisms develop gradually and over a long period of time—we would not expect something like a bird with a crocodile head. Charles Darwin said, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous successive slight modifications, my theory will absolutely break down." In modern biology, we have found many irreducibly complex structures which have not been successively modified. Now someone may say, there is a likeness between the DNA of two similar organisms. To quote *New Science Magazine*, "Nearly 75% of human genes have some counterpart in nematodes (millimetre long soil swelling worms)." This worm was found in the Cambrian explosion. This does not necessitate that they share the same ancestor as the new clergy would want us to believe.

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, we would want to analyse all scientific data in light of rational categories as discussed earlier. The path we propose in rational theology is not one of dismissing facts, but categorizing those facts or data in accordance with the certainty it imparts. And in doing so, it would remove all incorrect inferences and false assumptions.

The atheistic claim—as forwarded by Richard Dawkins—that religion is founded upon superstition has been answered by Islamic theology. Islam offers rational evidences to rationally prove Islamic creed, and thus, nullifying the claim of atheists.

2. ISLAM ANSWERS ATHEISM

For the existence of God, numerous traditional arguments have been set forth; for example, the Kalam cosmological argument, the contingency argument, and the design argument.

Upon proving the existence of God from the perspective of Islamic theology, the atheist continues to demonstrate an absence of certitude by persisting in criticisms against the religion of Islam. The traditional arguments for the existence of God—as mentioned—would impart certainty amongst just and rational theologians; however, atheist philosophers, on the other hand, would not agree upon these arguments. Most atheist philosophers tend to mention arguments from theodicy, or the problem of evil. This, of course, is Western philosophy. Modern Western philosophy, however, has not developed a sound interpretation of Islamic theology.

2.1 Islamic theology

Islamic theology is called ***Ilm al-Kalam***, the science of discourse, or speech. The question arises: ***why is it called Kalam***? Amongst scholars of theology, there is a lot of speculation regarding this; some have stated that the reason for the science being called such was because of the discussions and discourses involved. In the early period of Islam, mosques would be used for academic discussion—Muslim clerics would sit with a circle of students and discuss topics of interest. Occasionally, some students of the clerics would disagree and dispute with them—as in the case of ***Hasan al-Basri*** (رحمه الله) and would form their own circles and teach their own philosophy (usually influenced by Greek philosophy). As a result of this, debates would ensue amongst the circles of knowledge, thus leading to the science being known as the science of discussion.

In addition, some theologians have postulated that the science is known as Kalam due to the first theme of discussion which took place amongst the scholars of this science. During the early centuries of Islam, a theological school known as the ‘Mutazila’ was formed who contested and opposed the common Muslim belief that the ***Qur’an***—the speech of ***Allah*** (عز وجل)—is uncreated. As the word Kalam is defined as speech, and the first point of discussion revolved around the speech of ***Allah*** (عز وجل), the science quickly gained recognition as the science of speech.

Interpretation of Islamic theology in the Western world has been weak; mainly because those who translated Islamic works were orientalist. Since there was an influx of

immigrants from the Indian subcontinent who happened to be Muslim—many of whom were of rural backgrounds and were unable to speak in a sophisticated manner regarding Islamic theology—much of the representation of Islam in the Western world has been through the media; through the medium of news and news reports. An example of this, for instance, is David Hume’s ‘Dialogues and Natural History of Religion’—specifically, the Professor Gaskin edition in 1992, which is a fairly recent edition—stated when discussing the Abrahamic faiths in the introduction, “Causing miracles on special occasions and revealing himself and his purposes to mankind both in special revelations (e.g. through Abraham or Jesus or Mahomet).” Evident in this passage is that even the writing of the name of the Prophet of Islam is incorrect. In spite of the multitude of Muslims in the Western world, a professor of philosophy writing for a renowned university was unable to correctly write the name of a Prophet who is central to his topic of discussion.

An ignorance of traditional Kalam or Kalam arguments is one of the main reasons why Islamic theology is misunderstood. Of course, William Lane Craig is famous for using the Kalam argument, and he has taken it from Muslim theologians. What his sources are, I do not know; but if you look up dictionaries and encyclopedias of philosophy, they do not have names of well-renowned Islamic theologians. For instance, they will have **Abu Hamid al-Ghazali** (رحمه الله), but the only reason they include him in their compendiums is because he was refuted by Averroes, ‘Ibn Rushd’. But if you look up, for instance, Imam **Fakhr al-Din al-Razi** (رحمه الله)—a leading scholar in Islamic theology and a prolific author on the sciences of Islam—you tend not to find any mention of him in the famous encyclopedias of philosophy.

2.2 Arguments and fallacies

When discussing religion in this pseudo post-religion era, it is not seldom to hear of the absurd arguments and fallacies brought forth by the Atheist clergy—specifically against Islam. An example of one of the many absurd arguments is the statement of Bertrand Russel in which he is famously known to have said, “One could easily argue for the existence of a teapot god,” meaning a teapot floating in the skies with cups and saucers around it. He could have easily argued for a teapot god in the way theologians would argue for the existence of God.

As Muslims, we will say that this, in reality, is dis-analogy, meaning an analogy that does not fit in; because when we talk about God, or the Ultimate Existence, we discuss the Ultimate Existence as being Eternal, the aseity of God, He is self-subsistence like His self-existent nature, that He does not need anything else. On the contrary, in Western

Christian theology, they believe in the Divinity of Christ, unlike Muslims; Muslims do not believe in the Divinity of a man or a man-god, or a creature-god, or any god who has any likeness to creation in any way or form, which the traditional theologians have termed as the opposition to contingent things [*al-mukhalafa li al-Hawadith*]. So, there is no similarity between the two; this is why we would say regarding Russel's argument that this is dis-analogy, as the analogy does not fit with Islam.

Now, why would this be a fallacy when discussing Islam, because many times, a distinction is not made between Islam and Christianity. When discussing Christian theology—or any other theology, whether that is theology from the Hindu religion, or any other religion—a distinction is not drawn; and this distinction not being made is what leads to people making false analogies.

Islamic theology, or ***Ilm al-Kalam***, is based upon rational thought, this is our claim; can we live up to this claim? Well firstly, anyone who studies a basic text in traditional ***Ash'ari Kalam*** will find that in the beginning of the text they will mention that the one who blindly follows in his faith, his belief is unacceptable according to a group of theologians. We will not use the word faith, because a traditional definition of faith—as stipulated in some dictionaries—may state faith is blind; thus, we would say belief. The majority of traditional theologians have stated that someone who believes in something but does not believe based upon evidence and a rational faculty has acceptable faith, religiously speaking, but he will never cease to be in doubt and will always remain in doubt. While other theologians have mentioned that this faith or belief is unacceptable, because it goes against the very order of the ***Qur'an*** which states: ***“Know, that there is no deity except Allah”*** [47:19]. Therefore, because of this, the person, some have said, is sinful, because he believes without verifying. This, of course, does not mean that the person must become a theologian or be trained in philosophy or philosophical argument or natural sciences, no. Rather, this differs from person to person. Sometimes the story of the Bedouin is mentioned; when asked why does he believe in a creator he said, when I see the dung trail, I know that this trail of dung leads to a camel, when I see the mountains and desert, I know that there is a creator; a simple argument. Of course, someone trained in a university in philosophy will not accept this argument, but theologians would say his faith is acceptable according to his level of understanding. So, the more sophisticated a person is in his learning, and the more intellect he has been endowed, the more he is responsible. The level of responsibility will be higher so he will have to know the proofs for the existence of the Divine creator; this is something foundational in Islam.

Atheists tend to deem intuitive things impossible; however, Muslim theologians use them as arguments. For instance, impossibility of those things which are known intuitively; intuitively we know so many things, for instance we know of the impossibility of circular reasoning. If I say A caused B and B caused A, and then A caused B, this circular reasoning would be impossible. So, when discussing they will base an argument on deductive logic and then they would say they cancel out all things which are impossible. One of those impossibilities would be circular reasoning, or for instance continuous

regression; they will mention that something cannot regress continuously, it would be an impossibility. At some point, something would have to stop at an initial cause, for example if I said I received a plant from my neighbour, and you ask where did your neighbour receive that plant? I will say he bought this plant at a shop, where did the shop receive this plant? They got this plant from a garden. The plant would have to stop somewhere, otherwise this would lead to continuous regression. We cannot say he received the plant from his neighbour and he received the plant from his neighbour, continuously ad infinitum—the theologians say this is a rational impossibility.

Another example of what they refer to as a rational impossibility is something from nothing; something cannot come from nothing. These are examples of rational impossibilities that Muslim theologians would negate, throughout their texts, these are just a few examples.

The very foundations of Islamic belief which is based upon the testimony of faith, ***‘There is no God except Allah and Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of God,’*** is based upon the rational mind. For instance, the first portion, ‘There is no God except ***Allah***’ [***la ilaha illa Allah***], the Muslims developed the kalam argument and the argument from design, which of course, were taken from the ***Qur’an***. The ***Qur’an*** itself exhorted people to look around themselves to deduce the existence of the Divine Creator.

Now, some of the fallacies which are mentioned apart from those I have mentioned; like, ‘belief is blind.’ In Islam that will not hold any water; if someone says he is doubtful of his faith, he is not considered a believer. A believer would have to have certitude in his mind, as well as his heart.

Another fallacy being analogy of one religion with another, and also the fallacy of looking at religious people and drawing a conclusion regarding the religion. This, of course, religious people may do this with atheists also. If they observe atheists and see faults within them, they may draw a conclusion regarding atheism—this is a fallacy. In the same way, if someone observes the faults of religious people or religious people misinterpreting religious texts through fanaticism or fundamentalism, fundamentalism in the negative connotation used in the media, then drawing an analogy from that to the religion itself is false analogy.

Another example, is the often-asked question: ***Is Islam opposed to science?*** This is something which people have the right to ask. The simple answer would be no, Islam is not opposed to science, to scientific research, to medicine; Islam is not opposed to any scientific theory which is based on fact. Another objection is: ***Is belief in the Divine creator a scientific theory***, as Richard Dawkins states. We will say in answer to that objection that belief in God is not a scientific theory, it is something based upon deduction and also spiritual experience. But when discussing with atheists we would not use spiritual experience as an evidence, because for the atheist, the spiritual experience may be speculation or a fault of the mind or something wrong with the person; sometimes some people sit in spiritual seclusion and have a lack of food and water and may feel that they

are having a spiritual experience. The argument will be deduction; now our arguments against atheism, are they there in order to convince atheists? We will say no. The most a theologian can do is to silence the opponent; whether the person accepts Islam after this is the opponent's choice—we cannot force the religion upon a person, but rationally speaking, the idea behind Islamic theology is to silence the opponent.

2.3 Verifying scientific facts

What method did the Muslim theologians employ in verifying scientific fact?

Firstly, sensory perception. The scientific facts should not go against anything which is sensed by the five senses. For example, in the Muslim world, we did not have an uproar, unlike the catholic church, regarding the heliocentric model of the universe. There were Muslims scholars who held the position of the geocentric version of the universe, but when Copernicus and Galileo forwarded the theory of the heliocentric model of the universe, this did not lead to an upheaval in the Muslim world, why? Prior to them, there were Muslims who held that position; these things were looked upon as a matter of interpretation of those things that are perceived with the faculties; whatever we perceive from the faculties, and whatever induction we may make from the faculties may differ from person to person, but certain things will be called factual, for instance the colour of something, unless the person is colour blind. Remember colour blindness was discovered later in the Middle Ages, prior to the Middle Ages, people being colour blind was not recognised. Anyhow, the sensory perception; if something is based upon sensory perception, we claim, as Muslims, that the ***Qur'an***—because the ***Qur'an*** is the first source of Islam—will not go against anything that is perceived by the five senses. At this point, some people may have objections by pointing out some verses of the ***Qur'an***, but that will be discussed later.

Secondly, if the scientific fact is based upon *deduction*; a form of logic which takes a universal principle and applies it upon individual things, we believe this imparts certainty. If there is a universal rule, Muslim theologians will not reject that universal rule.

And *thirdly*, truthful reports of historical accounts of events. If an event takes place, and there are truthful reports regarding that, Muslims will not reject that report. Of course, the Muslims developed a method of verifying reports; some of you will be familiar with the science of Hadith. ***Hadith is in reference to literature which was compiled by the early Muslims, containing reports of the Prophet of Islam*** ﷺ. In Islam, there is a verification method of verifying reports. Thus, if there is a historical report which has been mass transmitted, it can be verified to determine the validity of the report. For instance, John F Kennedy was assassinated; this has been transmitted to us through multiple people.

Now, if the report however, is based upon an illogical, irrational point, for instance Muslims will say regarding Buddha being God, despite many people believing this, Muslims will say it is irrational for a human being, a creature to be God. So, this is the third method of verifying reports.

2.4 *Islam & science*

A question arises here which is very pertinent to this discussion; ***why are Muslims behind in science today?*** We can tackle this question in many ways, some people have attempted to tackle this through historical facts and looking at Muslims geopolitically and the causes of the lack of advancement in science in the Muslim world. But I will want to answer this theologically.

The answer would be that the way ***Allah*** has created human beings is such that if human beings place effort in any endeavour, whether that is scientific progression, economic progression, military progression, they will advance in that specific field. For instance, the Chinese; they are renowned to have made paper thousands of years ago, they are a hard-working nation, any advancement they have made, they have done so based upon their efforts. The same would be truthful of the Russians, the Indians and any other nation like America or Europe.

The situation of the Arabs was such that prior to ***Islam***, the Arabs did not have any type of progress—this is a historical fact. They were people limited to the deserts of Arabia, they had no progression in any way or form. Yes, they were advanced in language; the Arabic language is a very sophisticated language, but most Arabs could not read or write prior to the ***Qur'an***. Once the revelation of the ***Qur'an*** took place, the Arabs progressed and they conquered different regions of the World, and established a civilisation which extended from Spain to modern day Sindh which is in Western Pakistan, and even into regions like Kabul in Afghanistan. After this, whenever the Arabs move away from their religion, they go back to their original state, and that is the way they were when they were in the deserts. If they move away from their religion, they will not have the victory that they had in the first 100 years of Islam; in fact, they will revert back to their state before Islam, and this is the way humanity is. If human beings place effort in any endeavour, whether that is science, they will progress, it is not relative to people being Muslim or non-Muslim.

So, ***why are Muslims today—who are non-Arab Muslims—not advancing in science?*** I would say they are not advancing because they are not funding scientific research, their governments are not funding scientific research. If someone says that is due to Islam, I would say that is a fallacy, because most of us who originate from the Muslim world would know that the Muslim governments are secular, with the exception of Saudi Arabia and

Iran, who claim to be theocracies, regions governed by religion. Therefore, any lack of progress in the Muslim world is due to their own lack of efforts, but not because the *Qur'an or hadith* literature is in opposition to scientific research.

Remember, sciences and the advancement of the sciences is the property of humanity. It is not the property of a religious group or race; so, in reality there is no challenge between Western science and Islam, but at the same time I will say that **Islam** and Muslims must study the sciences like Physics, Biology and Chemistry and make advancements to benefit humanity. Historically speaking, Muslims knew the use of crude oil, but the Ottoman Empire prohibited the use of crude oil, why did they do so? Because they said crude oil is bad for the environment, burning it would cause the air to be polluted, so there are ethical guidelines in Islam for science, but Islam does not stop the advancement of science or Muslims going into the sciences. A Muslim scientist would be guided by ethical guidelines

as set out in **Islam**; firstly, the preservation of life, preservation of wealth and preservation of the environment. Anything that does not contradict those basic guidelines is valid; so nuclear weapons for instance, the Muslims are not the ones who invented weapons of mass destruction. How the world would have turned out if the Ottomans were victorious over Europe, we do not know.

Furthermore, there is no contradiction between science and theology. Because there is no contradiction between the two, theology, rather Islam, is not compelled to prove the existence of God via science. Secondly, science itself is inadequate of reaching a conclusion regarding the existence of God. Because science has its own inadequacies, not every answer is given by science. Yes, science has its role, but its role is limited; it can benefit human beings through inventions like a microphone, but never have we claimed that science can answer metaphysical or ultimate questions. Therefore, if anyone states that there is a clash between Islam and science, this would fall under a fallacy.

If we know the limitations of science, there wouldn't be questions of can we prove God by science.

If an atheist had asked me that question in a debate about science, I would ask that atheist to define for me the limits of science—science itself and the scientific method. Is there agreement amongst scientists on the scientific method? There is no agreement. So, something which is not defined in its method cannot lead us to ultimate questions. Secondly, in science you have regular paradigm shifts; how we interpret data differs from scientist to scientist. For instance, when Aristotle would observe the pendulum moving, he concluded that the pendulum has an innate nature to move, but Newton observed the same thing and came to the conclusion that there is a force known as gravity; both of them observed the same data. Data interpretation would be classified as being a paradigm; in science, there are regular paradigm shifts, where some scientists will have a paradigm, but there may be an anomaly in that paradigm, and that would lead to puzzle solving, that puzzle solving is known as science. Eventually, the puzzle-solving will lead

to a revolution in that paradigm, which will give birth to another paradigm. Initially it may be in an embryonic stage, but later that paradigm will grow until it becomes mainstream; certain scientists will accept that paradigm shift. So, science is not something which is immutable, it shifts from interpretation to interpretation.

2.5 Fifteen atheist fallacies

When discussing Islam, it is not seldom to encounter the common fallacies presented by the atheist clergy. These fallacies are fifteen in total:

1 • *Generalising something which is specific*. For instance, if you read the **Qur'an** or the **Hadith**, and you find something which is specific to an event or specific to a ruling in a given situation, the person may make the mistake of generalising this rule. This happens with verses of the **Qur'an**, especially if people are on the level of Newsnight discussions with Jeremy Paxman, and they have only three minutes to say something, they will quote the **Qur'an** and may quote a verse which would be viewed by millions of viewers, and then the context will not be mentioned.

2 • *Specifying something general*. So, there may be something general, a rule which is general, and the atheist may commit the fallacy of specifying, stating that it is specific. For instance, the **Hadith**, which is mass transmitted, states: **“Do not kill women and children in war.”** However, by observing the actions of ISIS or any other terrorist organisation, an atheist may say the prohibition in the **Hadith** is specific, based on the actions of ISIS. Is this not a fallacy? Did we not mention previously the fallacy of judging a religion by the actions of religious people? That would be considered a fallacy.

3 • *Additions which are not in the general*. There is a general statement in the **Qur'an** or **Hadith**, a person would quote that general statement, and would add additions to it. For example, the verses in the **Qur'an** which state: **“Kill them (polytheists) wherever you encounter them”** [2:191]. What is the context of the verse? Of course, a Muslim who reads the **Qur'an** will know that the verse is in reference to the treaty which was broken between the Quraysh and the Muslims; and when the Quraysh attempted to attack tribes, the Muslims were ordered to attack the polytheist army, this is the context of the verse; but the fallacy will add an additional thing. This was done by Nick Griffin, the former leader of BNP, he mentioned these types of verses where he mentioned ‘I will slay the Islamic Dragon’ after begging the BBC for airtime.

4 • *Hiding conditions and limits which change the context*. If there is a ruling in the **Qur'an** or **Hadith** which has conditions or limits, hiding the conditions and limits would change the entire context. When someone mentions amputations of the hand in the **Qur'an** that the thief's hand must be amputated, of course, any learned Muslim would

know that there are conditions and limitations for this. But quoting that verse will be sufficient for the atheist. Remember, Muslims may also fall into these fallacies, for instance when Muslims may quote the Bible to Christians. Many times, many Muslims have misquoted the Bible to a Christian, taking certain verses of it out of context, so this again, is a fallacy.

5 • Using quotes without the previous or following text. Again, this would apply to the verses of **Jihad**. Once, in a mosque, I debated a Christian preacher for many weeks. One of the first contentions he had was **jihad**. So together, we placed the entire verses of the **Qur'an** relating to **Jihad** together, and when he saw the true context, he dropped the argument of **Jihad**. But then I mentioned to him the verses of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, I challenged him to place those verses in their true context, he was unable to live up to that challenge, the only answer he had was that the verses on killing were from the Old Testament and the verses of mercy were from the New Testament. I responded that the God who ordered in the Old Testament is the same God who ordered in the New Testament. But, with the Qur'an he was unable to do that when we placed the entire verses of Jihad in their context.

6 • Playing with the meaning of the text to establish a point. The meaning may be clear but sometimes a person may attempt to change the meaning in order to make a point—this is also a fallacy.

7 • The strawman fallacy. A well-known fallacy in logic, which is making an argument, a presumption, and then attacking the presumption according to your own devices. So, you make an argument and then you attack the argument in order to make the opponent look weak. An Atheist may claim that I am doing this also, by saying he is presenting straw-man arguments, but they will have to demonstrate how what I have said is a straw-man argument. But a straw-man argument, simply put, is placing a false premise, and then attacking that premise, because it is weak in itself.

8 • Using a mistaken independent juristic reasoning [ijtihad] of a scholar. **Ijtihad** is where there is a difference of opinion amongst the scholars on a given point, each scholar will exert his efforts in order to establish a ruling; he could be mistaken or he could be right—these are differences of opinion. Sometimes a scholar may make a mistake.

Now, remember, when I say atheists, I am not be referring to western atheists specifically, I can be referring to atheists in the Arab world, people who read Arabic works by Muslim scholars; they may attempt to present a mistake of a scholar as the given position of **Islam**. Examples in the West, for instance, we have individuals like Omar Bakri. Now Omar Bakri is not a recognised scholar, even though anyone who grows a beard is posed off as a cleric in the media, such as Anjem Choudhary, generally speaking they mention he is a cleric yet he has no recognised clerical training from any sect, yet is posed off as a cleric. If he makes a statement, and an atheist uses his example as the given position of Islam, this would be a fallacy, in fact Anjem Choudhary is an unqualified individual; if you present the position of a qualified scholar, and the scholar is mistaken, even then the

premise is false. Because scholars who have made mistakes, it is not essential upon Muslims to follow them.

As mentioned previously, that the very belief a person has is based upon knowledge, he must have knowledge in order to have faith.

9 • Using the position of a sect—within *Islam*, like Christianity, we have sects—as the given position of *Islam*. When we say the given position of *Islam*, that would be the given position of Islam from the *Qur'an* and even then, the verse has to be very clear as to what it alludes to, from the *Hadith*, mass-transmitted *Hadith*—a *Hadith* which is not rejected by any Muslim—and the consensus of all the Muslim sects. Not the given position of a particular sect, because Islam was and is a free religion; what is the greatest evidence of this? The greatest evidence of this is the first 100 years of Islam. The number of sects that arose in the first 100 years or 200 years of Islam exceeds the number of sects that there are in Islam today. The mosques in Basra or Kufa, in Iraq, were filled with sects debating one another, there was freedom of speech. So, this freedom allowed for different views; but an atheist may use the statement of a sect in order to say that this is the default position of Islam.

Whenever stating the position of *Islam*, it would be necessary for atheists to present the consensus of the Muslims. For instance, sex change is permissible according to the Shia sect in Iran. Sunni Muslims, however, do not allow this. But if someone uses this argument, it would be a fallacy. If they try to deduce or make an inductive argument from this point, it would be a fallacy.

10 • *Texts attributed without verifying*. An example of this; how many of you have heard of the narration that Caliph Umar g conquered Alexandria in Egypt, and had the library of Alexandria burned? Do you know the source for this account? The source for that account was written 600 years after Umar g, without a chain; and surprisingly, or coincidentally, within the Crusader period. Historically speaking, Muslims will not accept this, that Umar g had a library burnt, because we do not believe in book-burning; despite what we saw in the eighties with the Salman Rushdie book-burning, it is not an intrinsic belief of Muslims to burn books. Our theological position is to counter the arguments of those books. Otherwise, there are books available today in the Muslim world, which speak against Islam, but the scholars have answered those books. For instance, the work of Ibn Rushd, Averroes, which he wrote against **Imam Ghazali** (رحمه الله) is available in the Arabic markets.

So, texts attributed without verifying; this is very important, that when attributing something, you must look at how Muslims have classified something. In the Muslim world, we have a verification method, that such and such person reported to so and so, until there is a chain from the person reporting to what is reported, and then the scholars will verify the chain, they will check the biographies of every narrator, if the biography is unknown the report will be rejected. This is a verification method unlike Western archaeology. In Western archaeology, they will find the remnants of a place, and will draw

inductions based upon what they perceive. Unless the thing is obvious, Muslim historians would leave everything as assumption, rather than historical fact. Historical fact will only be based upon reports that have been verified. So, the report of Umar g burning the library of Alexandria is a report which cannot be verified, and western orientalist took this report and used it; whenever you check the biography of Umar g, you will find that you will mention this account, in fact if you check this account you will find Christians using this example.

11 • *Hiding or ignorance of valid texts*. Sometimes, a person may be told that *Islam* is a religion of violence, but they may not know or be familiar with texts that exhorted people to be peaceful, or they will hide those texts, and will only highlight those that have perceived violence, whilst in reality those texts are related to military rulings.

12 • *‘Science is based upon atheism’—this is a fallacy*. This fallacy is committed also by Arab atheists, that scientific progression and atheism are something which are intrinsically linked, both of them revolve around one another; this is false. In fact, most of the scientists of the past were Theists, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. of course, there is a general ignorance of Muslim scientific contribution in the Western World, but whether the vast majority of scientists who contributed to science within the past 1400 years, have been theists, whether they were from the Western World or the Muslim World.

13 • *The red-herring*. Or what I will call side-issue fallacy. For instance, if someone asked me regarding the arguments for God, and I present to him the design teleological argument, or the *Kalam* cosmological argument, the person may start debating from theodicy, the problem of evil. These are two things which are unrelated; it is a fallacy, a red-herring. So, if we are discussing a given point, the atheist may place a red herring. Of course, this fallacy can be done by a theist also, if they are debating a Christian or a non-Muslim who is an atheist, the atheist may pose a question and the Muslim may dodge the question by placing a red herring.

14 • *Appeal to popularity or authority*. If something is popular, it does not make it factual. Similarly, authority, by saying the Pope said this, does not make it factual either. Of course, in the Muslim world—the Muslim world and the Christian Catholic world are poles apart in terms of authority—anyone who studies Islam, reaches a level of qualification where he is recognised by his peers, becomes a scholar. Whether people accept him as an authority is a personal choice, unlike the Catholic church; when the Pope gives an edict, Catholics must follow, but in the Muslim world there is no such thing. So even the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, the one who gives a fatwa, it is not essential upon Muslims to follow him; there are many Muslims who oppose him. Or the Ayatollah clerics in Iran, if they give a verdict in Iran, it is not essential upon Muslims to follow him; in fact, the fatwa will be analysed by other theologians and jurists. So, appeal to popularity or authority is something which is not accepted. Authority of the *Qur’an*, *Hadith*, the sayings of the *Prophet s* (عليه السلام), or juristic consensus, this is not what we are discussing.

15 • *Misusing words*. Like making a distinction between belief and reason. Some people will say belief is not built upon reason, but you may have met some people which they do not base belief upon reason, but the given position of the majority of Muslims, is that if belief is built upon reason, such a belief, according to some is valid, and according to another such a person is sinful as he has not based his faith upon reason.

These are 15 fallacies that we must avoid in discussion.

2.6 Laws of governance

In Islamic law [*Sharia*], there are laws of governance [*ahkam al-sul~a*]. What do we mean by laws of governance? There are many verses in the *Qur'an* which relate to governance; if the contexts of those verses are not shown, people can fall into fallacies. For instance, slavery in the *Qur'an*; ***why is there slavery in the Qur'an?*** This is a question which people ask. The answer would be that in pre-Islamic Arabia, slavery was entrenched in Arabian culture, in fact within the Roman and Persian Cultures also. When the *Qur'an* was revealed, in that context, verses regarding slavery were revealed. When the rulings of Islam developed, those rulings mention, if you have a slave, the slave must eat the same food as you, the slave must wear the same quality of clothing as you, and if the slave has a complaint against his master, he has the right to go and complain to the ruler. Another example, that a person cannot call his slave 'my slave,' or the person must not burden his slave with too much work. These were rulings which revealed over time.

Then *Islam* established laws concerning freeing slaves. If someone commits manslaughter, he must free a slave; if someone breaks an oath, he must free a slave; if someone commits x, y and z, he must free a slave.

So, emancipation of slaves was mentioned in the *Qur'an*; but someone at this point may object and ask: ***why in the Qur'an are there verses which mention taking captives or slaves?*** The answer would be that the context of those verses was relating to war; the disbelievers at that time would take Muslim men, women and children as slaves. The *Qur'an*, therefore, gave the choice to the *Prophet s* (عليه السلام), that you have four choices;

Firstly, you can take them as captives;

Secondly, you can take a ransom;

Thirdly you can kill them, and;

Finally, you can free them.

This was a choice in that given context. I would like to ask those who are familiar, which choice did the *Prophet s* (عليه السلام) take? The *Prophet s* (عليه السلام) took a ransom for

them. So that verse also has a context, and many of them were freed. The context of that verse was that the non-Muslims were taking the Muslims as slaves, so this is why the actions of ISIS today, of taking the Yazidi women as slaves, is also decontextualising those verses. That the slavery was only something legislated in a context where the non-Muslims were taking Muslims as slaves. But even then, when those slaves were taken, they were given rights; the number of which is known in the Islamic texts.

Another famous example of what we call rules of governance is Jihad. I challenge any non-Muslim or Muslim that the verses relating to jihad, the context of all those verses was defensive or pre-emptive to remove a threat from the state, or any potential threat. Even the incidents in the life of the **Prophet s** (عليه السلام) related to defence of the Muslim lands. Someone may say then what is the context of the Islamic conquests; but I will again say that the context of the Islamic conquests were also pre-emptive; this is my proposition. Then we have rules relating to corporal punishments [*hudud*]; what is mentioned in the Qur'an is lashing, stoning to death is not mentioned in the Qur'an, that is something for us to ponder upon.

2.7 Mass transmission

The final thing I would want to mention is the distinction between *mutawatir* and *non-mutawatir*. **Mutawatir** is mass transmission; a concept in Islam that so many people give a report regarding something that it was impossible for those people to congregate and form a lie. That number of people passes on the report to a similar or higher degree, and this continues through an unbroken chain, this is mutawatir. The Christians will claim this for the Crucifixion; for instance, they will say Christ was crucified, this was witnessed by a large number of people and this report continued to our day today, this is known as mutawatir, mass transmission.

Mass transmission is different to non-mass transmission. So, when we record a hadith, a report of the Prophet s, that hadith would have to fit the criteria of mass transmission for all Muslims to accept. Those hadith which do not fall into mass transmission are those things that are debatable, which Muslims will debate amongst themselves, whether or not the report is sufficient. For instance, many non-Muslims now are familiar with **Bukhari** and Muslim, but I would like to ask another question: **Are all the hadith from Bukhari and Muslim mass transmitted?** The answer will be no. There are some reports which are mutawatir, by mutawatir we mean not only does Bukhari record that hadith, but Muslim and all the other hadith compilations from different narrators. So, when discussing we will discuss verses of the **Qur'an**, which by the way, all of the **Qur'an** is considered mass transmitted. The **Qur'an** is not classified into mass transmission and non-mass transmission, but the hadith is classified as such. So, for a non-Muslim, or former Muslims, or Christians, this is a tip when debating someone like myself. When discussing a hadith,

make the distinction, is this hadith mutawatir or non-mutawatir, how do you check? You can verify it from scholars who have compiled dictionaries on mutawatir hadith, all those hadith that are agreed upon by everyone, those dictionaries are available in Arabic; or you could consult someone who is an Orientalist from SOAS, School of Orientalist and African Studies, or Birmingham University if they study Islamic Studies.

2.8 Theology & philosophy

In the West they term that as being Philosophical theology, there are words like the Philosophy of the kalam, for instance, which is basically rationalising theological beliefs. Theology is a branch of philosophy according to Western philosophers, this is why our Salafi brothers mistaken *Ash'ari* kalam as philosophy; they make the mistake of associating *Ash'ari* theology with philosophy, because the *Ash'aris* are the ones who countered philosophical thought in the Muslim world.

2.9 Belief

If somebody has a reasonable doubt, making a distinction between reasonable doubt and something which Muslims call *waswasa*, a thought. Drawing a distinction between the two; an actual doubt makes a person agnostic, as philosophy would term, agnosticism is not Islam. This is one of the main reasons why Muslims have a weak outlook amongst other people, for instance, people will ask: there are so many Muslims but they do not practice such and such aspect of *Islam*. The reason being that there are many agnostics among them. But, legally speaking, we have not been told to term those people as non-Muslims, because the ultimate Judge is *Allah* ﷻ, we are told as Muslims to judge on the outer behaviour; if somebody openly claims to be a Muslim, we are told to call him a Muslim. The reality however, on the Day of Judgement, could be that someone who was openly a non-Muslim but inwardly believed in *Islam* and died as a Muslim. Legally speaking on earth, we are told to treat him as a non-Muslim; we do not pray the funeral prayer over him, we do not send mercy upon his soul, but there may be some people who outwardly died as Muslims but it will be revealed that such a person was an agnostic in reality. So, a person would have to believe in the *Qur'an* and the *Prophet* ﷺ completely, but that belief must be based upon his mind and heart, according to his ability.

2.10 Islam & the sword

This claim is an old claim from the colonial period when orientalist made this claim up until today. The claim is refuted by historical fact. For instance, in Syria, you have over 15% of the population which is Christian, and prior to the formation of Israel, there was a population of Jews living and residing in Syria. If **Islam** was spread by the sword, in modern Syria there would not be a Christian community; because Damascus was one of the first cities conquered by the Muslims. In the same way, in Iraq there are many Christian minorities and other religions, in Egypt the Copts alone make a population that exceeds 10 million; if Islam was spread in these lands by the sword, no minority would have remained. Islam entered Indonesia and Malaysia, millions of people accepted Islam in those lands, whilst to this day no Arab army entered those lands. In fact, it was Yemeni traders who entered Indonesia and Malaysia, and people accepted Islam at their hands. In the same way, in the Indian subcontinent, even though the Mughals conquered the Indian Subcontinent, who were central Asian Muslims, millions of Indians accepted **Islam** at the hands of preachers, people who came and preached Islam in those lands. So, the reason why people say Islam spread by the sword is because Islam has been a political force to be reckoned with; the Ottomans entered Vienna, but the Ottomans did not force convert anyone, they were a military power but forced conversions were never done. So isolated incidents are quoted from the biography of the **Prophet** ﷺ in order to superimpose the image that **Islam** was spread by the sword. When we categorise the **Qur'an** and the **hadith**, as previously mentioned, we must make a distinction between mutawatir, mass transmitted, and non mutawatir, and then if the report is not mass transmitted, we must verify the context, as well as the narrators of the report.

Many atheists ask why did God allow evil and suffering, what is the Islamic theological explanation of this?

When we point out suffering in the world, it is unfair to point out only the suffering in this world. It is necessary to point out that if there is a God, there is a Day of Judgement, and if there is a Day of Judgement, there is reward and punishment; so those who suffered on earth will be rewarded. But if someone takes the isolated example of this worldly life, and makes a proposition based upon that, that proposition is false; because they would have to look at the entire context of the theological belief. The theological belief would be that there is a hereafter. Also, human suffering is associated with free will. Human beings have free will, because of this, some human beings choose to do evil to other humans, so there is evil which emanates from humans from their own free will then there is natural disasters; the atheist who poses this question would term natural disasters as being evil, but this is something relative. When we discuss the problem of evil, when we term natural disasters as being evil, those natural disasters are termed as being evil relatively, how?

The Divine knowledge of God; when we look at the Divine knowledge, it would encompass the outcome of any evil. The outcome of any evil would have to be determined by the Divine knowledge. **Allah** ﷻ would know whether the outcome of this thing is good or bad. So, the concept of evil, when we look at Divine actions, is something relative to the Divine knowledge of God Almighty.

Is there any way God Almighty can will something bad for someone, meaning the ultimate result for that person is evil?

No. Muslims state that injustice is an impossibility to be ascribed to **Allah** ﷻ. You can ascribe mercy and justice, but not injustice; injustice would be considered something impossible. In effect, the outcome for someone being evil would only be as a result of their own doing. For instance, in Islamic theology do we believe children will go to hell? No, but in Catholic theology do they believe children who are not born within the Catholic faith will go to hell? Yes; why do Muslims believe children will not go to hell? Because children, firstly, their intellect has not completely developed, they need to attain maturity in order to attain the full level of cognition of what they are doing. Even then, the physically handicapped, or mentally disabled person, we believe they will not go to hell, because they are not taken to task. As Muslims, we believe that someone who lived in a jungle or never heard of the **Qur'an** or the **Prophet** ﷺ will not go to hell, because the **Qur'an** states **'We will not punish anyone, until we send a Messenger'**, and even then, if someone is mentally ill, or a child, they will not be tasked by the Divine to accept **Islam**. So, the human being who is an adult, sane, his faculties are working are those who are tasked, this is called **mukallaf**. If such a person chooses to do bad, his outcome will be bad. But anyone who is out of this category of mukallaf - meaning tasked by the Divine to believe - will never face a bad outcome. So, a child who dies on earth, we know his outcome is good because he has gone to the hereafter and the hereafter is good for him. On the contrary, is wealth and health good for everyone? We would say yes, but this is something relative, again. For instance, if God knows an individual who attains wealth will cause havoc on earth with his wealth, he will buy weapons, drugs and alcohol,

causing evil on earth, wealth may be taken away from them, and in some cases given to them to test them. This, again, goes back to the Divine knowledge. So, in effect, sometimes what philosophers do is make the attempt to qualify the knowledge of God, or to judge the divine knowledge of God. As theologians, we would say that we know God knows what we do not know, we accept that, and there are certain questions, as human beings, we will not be able to answer. But not being able to answer certain specifics does not make the overall principle wrong.

What causes an individual to become an atheist?

Of course, there are social reasons, in the case of some Muslims who become atheists, there may be many factors; but if there is an objective atheist who has become an atheist solely based on knowledge, those are the people with whom we are conversing. If there is someone who has become an atheist because his upbringing was different to other

Muslims or because he has emotional issues with the Muslim community or because of political reasons, our dialoguing with them is of no benefit. This seminar was composed for people who are objective atheists; people who have become atheists solely due to their mind, without any emotional baggage. For instance, I hear of some Muslims and Christians who become atheists because they were bullied at school and this led them to looking at atheism. Of course, this is not an attack on objective atheists; if someone has become an atheist solely on objective and logical grounds, then we are open to dialoguing with them. So, there are many multi-faceted reasons as to why people turn to atheism.

Shi'as claim we will not get to see God on the day of Judgement because of the verse 'you shall never see me', how do we answer this?

Yes the verse, in *Surah al-A'raf*, is in reference to *Sayyiduna Musa* (upon him be peace), *Moses* عليه السلام, when he requested to see *Allah* ﷻ, *Allah* ﷻ said - there is a context to the verse - he said **'I shall manifest myself on the mountain, and if the mountain is able to take my manifestation, you will see me, and if it is unable to take my manifestation, you will not see me'**. In *Surah al-Qiyamah*, *Allah* ﷻ states, **'On that day there shall be bright illuminated faces, looking at their lord'**. So, the Sunni Muslims have other evidence, and they place this particular verse in its true context.

If God does exist, why are so many innocent people getting killed in the world?

Again, those people that are being killed are being killed at the hands of human beings. If you mean natural disasters, again this goes back to the initial question of what is the outcome of those people, is the outcome good or bad for those people? The outcome would be good. But if you refer to human beings killing other human beings, if *Allah* ﷻ intervened in the killing of human beings on earth, then this would do away with our free will. The fact that we have free will is for earth. On the day of judgement, those human beings who carry out these atrocities will be judged and will pay for their atrocities. This is an objection to atheism that how do you answer the fact that someone as evil as Hitler, when he died, and someone like Princess Diana or Mother Teresa, according to the atheist logic would these two groups of people be similar? As theists, we would say no; God will judge each one according to his action. But if a person does not believe in a day of judgement, in effect believe that good and bad are equal, and this would result in this question being defunct also, because there is no good and bad, there is no evil because there is no day of judgement and no accounting for those people.

Can you ever see Allah in a dream or reality? Where is Allah?

Like I said regarding seeing **Allah** ﷻ, the eyes that we have in this world are unable to see the manifestation of **Allah** ﷻ on earth, but the Muslim theologians have mentioned that in the hereafter we will have the vision of Allah ﷻ. Where is Allah? This question is flawed, in the sense that if a person believes that **Allah** ﷻ is in a place. If, however, they mean to draw a distinction between idols and the Ultimate God, then that is different, but by saying where is **Allah** ﷻ, if they mean God is contained by space and time, as Muslims, we would say God exists before space and time, and he exists now as He was before the existence of space and time. He is now as He was, He is not prone to change. Because if He was prone to change, this would make His nature contingent, and by having a contingent nature, it would mean He has a cause, because everything contingent in the universe has a cause, and this would

lead to regression; that the cause would have to have a cause which would have a cause to no end. So, we would say God exists without time and place, because He created time and place. Of course, this brings out the question which Christians have a problem with which is 'therefore you do not have a personal God', they believe God needs to manifest himself for human beings to be able to see and feel God. The answer to that we have the belief of the Divine attributes of **Allah** ﷻ with which we see the effect within creation. For instance, we see the Divine mercy of God in creation, the Divine power of God in creation. We also see the manifestation of other names and attributes of **Allah** ﷻ, for instance one of the names of **Allah** ﷻ is *al-Muntaqim*, the Avenger, another name is *al-Khafidh* the One who lowers, another name is *ar-Rafi'* the One who raises. So, there are names of **Allah** ﷻ of which we observe the manifestation around us.

Christians believe in the crucifixion; how would a Muslim defend the point that the crucifixion did not occur?

The crucifixion of Christ, Muslims would say that this is not an accurate historical event. Remember earlier I mentioned the concept of Mutawatir, mass transmitted. For an event to be true, you need mass transmission from the very inception of the event, with a continuous unbroken chain. So, we will say for instance, that the number of people who witnessed the **Prophet of Islam** ﷺ in Makkah was a multitude of people, with an unbroken chain from that time till today, there are people who testify that he existed and the **Qur'an** was revealed upon him. The same with **Jesus Christ** (peace be upon him). That the number of people who witnessed his existence were of a multitude, with an unbroken chain till our time today. But the crucifixion that took place is only testified by the authors of the gospels, and the gospels do not reach the level of mass transmission. The condition of mass transmission is that it be impossible for a multitude of people to congregate and form a lie. For instance, if dozens of people lived in Basra, the other in

Kufa, another in Cairo, another in Damascus and so forth; it would be impossible for all of them to congregate and form a lie before the modern age. In our time we have technology, but in that time, it would have been impossible for all of them to congregate and make a lie. There is no such thing with the crucifixion. The only testament we have is the gospels of the Bible. The gospels were written 100 years after the raising of Jesus, Isa (upon him be peace). So, is there an unbroken chain between the writers of the gospel and Jesus himself?

How do we know the Qur'an is the truth?

You know the Qur'an is the truth if you pick up the Qur'an and read it from cover to cover. If someone actually reads the Qur'an, cover to cover, and understands the context of the verses, and if there is something difficult to understand they could question a scholar of Islam, after they read the **Qur'an**, **Allah** ﷻ has left the choice with them; either they accept or reject. It is up to them, 'there is no compulsion in religion' as **Allah** ﷻ states. Someone asked about jihad, they said 'we thought jihad was offensive', I said yes, it is offensive when it is done to protect the state, but Islam did not legislate jihad except to preserve the freedom of preaching Islam. If there is a country which is not adversary to Muslims and allows the free preaching of Islam, will the Muslims launch jihad against such a country? The answer is no.

What proof is there for the Prophets?

Remember, Prophethood in Islam is different to Prophethood in Christianity. In Christianity, they believe Prophets can lie and sin. In fact, in the Old Testament, Noah is described as being drunk, Lot is described as having committed incest and there are multiple sins attributed to the Prophets in the Old Testament. In Muslim theology, Prophets are sinless and are unable to commit sins; what is the logical proof for this? If they were able to lie, there would be a possibility of a lie in the Divine revelation. If they were able to commit sins, people would not imitate them because they are humans who commit sins and error. While in Islamic theology, Prophets are perfect human beings, so the perfection of the Prophets is one of the proofs. Now, if Christians had this belief today, they would not have claimants to prophethood in America. Of course, in the Muslim world there are also claimants of prophethood, like in India you had a man known as Mirza Ghulam Qadiyani who lived over a hundred years ago, how was his claim refuted? By his lack of perfection. So human perfection is one of the conditions, to the extent that **Ash'ari** theologians state that for a Prophet to be a Prophet, he must also have bodily perfection. He cannot have faults on the face and on the body, he cannot have illnesses which show some kind of defect or fault in him, so this is how we know Prophets are Prophets. There is also the evidence of miracles.

How is the theory of evolution compatible with an Islamic education?

Remember, earlier I mentioned paradigm shifts. Evolution is an actual paradigm of how to view scientific data; the acquirement of fossils, study of the genes etc. The majority of scientists have induced from this the hypothesis that this is a result of human evolution. So how do we counter this approach? As Muslims, we would say that this paradigm, this induction of the fossil record is something that is prone to change. If there is any anomaly in this hypothesis, eventually that anomaly will lead to a scientific revolution which will oppose the previous paradigm. This leads us to the conclusion that the evolution theory is not something which is immutable, stable and free from change. So, the best way of countering any supposed theory which claims to counter Islam is to understand epistemology, how we approach scientific theory. We would say our approach is that scientific theory does not become fact until we can empirically observe with our senses, or we can logically deduce. Anything else which does not fall under this category, we will categorise as an induced hypothesis which cannot oppose certainty. In conclusion, the theory of evolution will not be concluded as being deductive. For instance, if Richard Dawkins came here, I will not debate him on certain scientific facts. I will debate him on the induction that he has superimposed on those scientific facts, the conclusion that he has drawn. And that is the sphere of philosophy, not the sphere of science. We do not debate observable scientific data, we debate the conclusion drawn from that data. So, our position to modern evolution is what the position of anyone would have been towards the geocentric model prior to the heliocentric model coming along. If another model comes along, does it mean we switch to that model? Do we keep switching our beliefs according to different scientific models or paradigms? The answer is no, mainly because the theory of evolution does have anomalies. There are scientists who deny this, who claim that it does not have any anomalies; this is not a fact, there are anomalies in any scientific theory. As theists, we wait for those anomalies to be exposed and as the process of science is puzzle-solving, this would eventually lead to another paradigm shifts. So, paradigm shifts in scientific theory are not something that affect our beliefs which are based on deduction. Based on deduction we believe in the existence of a Divine creator. We believe in revelation based upon the existence of a Divine Creator. We do not approach this in the same way that Christian creationists have approached it. Christian creationists believe in a young earth, that the earth is 7000 years old. In Muslim sources, we find some scholars saying that the earth is 7000 years old. If someone quotes that scholar, which fallacy would that fall into? It would fall into number eight, using a mistaken ijtihad of a scholar. That report of the earth being 7000 years old is based upon an Israelite report rather than an Islamic source. So, when we tackle the theory of evolution, as theologians we do not claim that we are tackling it as scientists. We are tackling the theory of evolution through the philosophy of science, how do we approach any scientific theory which is not based upon empirical observable points or deduction, except it's based on induction or hypothesis, we approach this by teaching our congregation or children the logical method of approaching any scientific theory. There are flaws in the theory of

evolution, but will we be taken seriously if we point out those flaws, again appeal to authority; people would ask do you know more about biology or does Richard Dawkins? So, by me quoting scientific facts to an audience, will that convince them? No, they have fallen in the fallacy of appeal to authority. Or if something is famous, does it make it true? The last point I will like to make is regarding how change occurs in a scientific community. Sometimes you may have a scientific community that agrees upon a certain point. When an anomaly is found in a scientific theory, a person who discovers a new paradigm may change the consensus of a scientific community. Once the consensus changes, the scientific position also changes, and there is a shift which occurs from one position to another. So, these shifts occur every hundred years. I guarantee you, a hundred years from now the modern-day evolution theory will change. So, we cannot accept the evolution theory based upon those philosophical grounds.

If Islam isn't an invading religious movement, why did the Caliphs conquer other lands?

Remember what I said regarding jihad; historically speaking, jihad was defensive, and yes Muslims did conquer other lands. On what basis did they conquer those lands? On the basis of removing any threat to Muslim lands or in order to emancipate any groups of people in those lands, this is the reason why the Caliphs conquered those lands. Now, anyone can cite historical sources, but they must be accurate in how they quote those sources. Chainless reports for instance, are rejected. If those reports are solitary reports, we may reject that report depending on the verification method. But, historically speaking, I will challenge any non-Muslim or Muslim to show me where jihad was legislated purely for the reason of aggression. In fact, no one can prove this. If they do, they will fall into any one of these fifteen fallacies that I have mentioned.

What are your strongest arguments for the existence of a Creator?

Very simply put, the existence of Creation. The existence of creation shows the existence of a Creator. This is something we believe intuitively. What details relate to that, is the Creator eternal? Yes, he would have to be; if he wasn't this would lead to regression because He would need a Creator. Our reason of Islamic theology is not necessarily to convert people, we are not proselytizing, we are answering any objections placed on Islam. As a Muslim, for instance, if I met an atheist, I would say this is Islam, you can accept or reject; he may have some objections. I may point out fallacies in his objections or answer them, it is up to him to accept. We are not claiming to revert people. Our methods, firstly, are based upon syllogistic proofs, deductive proof. For instance, the contingency of the universe shows that it has a cause. Why do we say the universe has a cause? Because it has a contingent nature - by that we mean anything that comes into existence after non-existence. This leads us to the conclusion that the universe is caused, if it was not it would either lead to the conclusion that the universe caused itself or came

of nothing, this goes against our intuitive mind, that the universe cannot come of nothing and cannot cause itself to exist. So, the third solution is that the universe is caused. Someone may ask how we jumped to the conclusion of the cause being God, we will say that the initial cause must be uncaused, because if he was caused that cause must have a cause, leading to regression which again, is a logical absurdity. So, we believe in the aseity of that initial cause, which we call God. Atheists may claim this syllogism is weak, our response would be that they would have to demonstrate without fallacies that it is weak.

ATHEISM REVISITED

The purpose of congregating today is in order to tackle some of the objections posed by atheists, people who reject the very existence of **Allah** ﷻ, as well as those who have left Islam, former Muslims. Being exposed to a secular education and a secular society, Muslims must be equipped with knowing how to counter those objections. Throughout many lectures that I have delivered, I have covered some of those questions, and for today, we have specific questions.

Why is the Qur'an any different to the Bible in terms of its contents?

The response to this question is that the Bible was compiled by numerous authors over hundreds of years, while **alQur'an al-Karim** was revealed upon the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ. Now, according to the atheists, the author of the **Qur'an** is the **Prophet of Islam** ﷺ. The Muslim will say that the **Messenger of Allah** (ﷺ) was the one upon whom the Qur'an was revealed. But this distinction alone makes a difference, that the **Qur'an** was revealed upon the **Messenger of Allah** (ﷺ) over a period of 23 years, while the Bible was written by numerous authors, numerous contributors; you have the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament, the first five books are the Pentateuch, the books revealed upon **Musa** (upon him be peace), which we refer to as being the Torah. The first five books of the Bible have a different author to the other books of the Bible, like the Song of Songs attributed to **Sulayman** (upon him be peace), or you have the Psalms of **Dawud** (upon him be peace), or the book of Ezekiel, the book of Jeremiah; different authors for different books. Now the Christians of course believe that those books were written by divinely inspired authors, but the Qur'an is one book revealed upon one individual who is the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ. Therefore, the subject matter of the **Qur'an** is one. Unlike the Bible which was revealed to different generations; you have the four gospels in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and then other books like

the book of Revelations, these books were revealed at different times to different individuals, but the Qur'an was revealed in one period of 23 years to one generation, therefore the subject matter of the Qur'an is one. This also makes us understand that whenever we quote a verse of the Qur'an, one verse cannot be understood exclusively, without looking at the entire contents of the **Qur'an** relating to that one subject; for instance, if someone quotes a verse relating to jihad, then the entire verses of the **Qur'an** relating to jihad must be analysed. A person cannot just look at one verse relating to jihad and draw a conclusion. So, therefore, this alone makes a great distinction between the Bible and the **Qur'an**. So, the way an atheist approaches the Bible must be different to the way he approaches the Qur'an. Aside from this, we would say that the **Qur'an** must be understood in the way the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ explained the **Qur'an**. So, along with the Qur'an, the hadith - the narrations of the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ have been related, and have reached us in the same way that the Qur'an has reached us. There are over 300 narrations from the Messenger of Allah that have reached us through mass transmission. Mass transmission is when a congregation of people relate something, so many people that it would be logically impossible for such a large number of people to congregate and concoct a lie. So, this is one of the reasons why we would say that the Qur'an is different to the Bible.

Why does the Qur'an not have chapters according to subjects, like modern books?

The subject of the Qur'an is one. That subject is that **Allah** ﷻ has revealed the **Qur'an** upon the **Messenger of Allah** (ﷺ) in order to command humanity to worship him, this is the subject of the Qur'an. Every verse of the **Qur'an** revolves around this one subject. So, even the narratives, the stories (*qasas*) in the **Qur'an**, are there to encourage people to worship **Allah** ﷻ. The Divine judgements found in the **Qur'an** are there to encourage people to worship **Allah** ﷻ. Every verse of the Qur'an goes back to this one subject, which is bringing humanity to worship **Allah** ﷻ. Therefore, different chapters are not needed in the **Qur'an** like modern books, because the subject matter is one.

Also, from age to age, how people compile books will differ. For instance, a few hundred years ago, the way someone would formulate a book would be different to how we formulate a book today. Modern printing and modern editing norms are different to those of a hundred or a few hundred years ago. So, if someone expects the **Qur'an** to follow the modern standards, people who will come in later generations will expect the **Qur'an** to be compiled according to their standards. Therefore, the **Qur'an** has a unique standard.

That unique standard is that the subject matter of the *Qur'an* is one, this is why the *Qur'an* also, as stated earlier, is different to the Bible, that when one verse of the *Qur'an* on any given subject is quoted, it must be understood in light of all other verses relating to that subject, as well as the hadith, the narrations of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ, and the mass transmitted narrations. For instance, it is mass transmitted from the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) that he forbade the killing of women, children, old men and civilians, this is well known in religion. So, irrelevant to what governments or terrorist groups or the media tell us that *Islam* believes in such and such, we as Muslims know that it has been mass transmitted from the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) that such people are not to be military targets. This *hadith* of the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) is also an explanation of the *Qur'an*. So, this would answer the objection of why the *Qur'an* does not have chapters according to subjects, like modern books.

At this point, another objection is made; *Why does the Qur'an talk of a sensual paradise, is it offering materialism to its adherents?*

Again, we hear, throughout the Neoconservative media, that the *Qur'an* is calling for 70 virgins for every martyr that dies, even though there is no such verse in the *Qur'an*, not what the Bible belt Christians in America would want us to believe, or potential converts to Islam to believe, in order to move them away from Islam. But the question is, does Islam call for a sensual paradise and why are the verses of the *Qur'an* enticing people through materialism? The response is that the reward of paradise is a spiritual reward. In fact, we would say in the way our bodies in this world are dominantly physical, in the hereafter our spirit will be more dominant than our physical body. So, our spirit would be more dominant in the way our body is more dominant in this realm. Of course, we believe in bodily resurrection; the resurrection in the hereafter is bodily, but the spirit will overwhelm the body. Now, because the hereafter is a spiritual life, many of the non-Muslims in the time of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ, people who were materialistic, did not feel that they need to accept Islam because they felt that they will have no reward in the hereafter, it is purely spiritual. So, based upon this the *Qur'an* told them that in paradise there will be such and such delights and such and such luxury, mentioning those materialistic things. Some Christians, based on this, begin to think that the Paradise of the Muslims is such a Paradise which has no spirituality, because the *Qur'an* mentions wine and meat of birds and the hur, the maidens of Paradise. Based upon this, it is a sensual paradise, but the only reason these things were pinpointed for people was because human beings are habitual in their material life, and the *Qur'an* told them by accepting this religion you will still have reward and some aspects of this material life, even in the hereafter. Based on this, some of the atheists will ask the question; why are men promised the wide-eyed maidens and women are not promised this? The response to this is that if a man had a son, and when he wanted to marry off his son he describes

the potential wives to his son, and he mentions that your potential wife is beautiful; this, amongst Arabs, was something common, that when they will mention a potential wife to a male, they will describe the woman and her beauty. But, when they had a daughter, and they mentioned to her a potential husband, they will not become explicit out of modesty, this is the way the Arabs were in that time. When mentioning a potential spouse, a husband for their daughter, they will not be explicit. So, the *Qur'an*, taking this into consideration, mentioned the maidens of paradise for the men. But, for what is stored for the women in Paradise, *Allah* ﷻ alluded to this without any explicit statements in the *Qur'an*. So, this objection does not hold any weight, the objection that the women will not have any reward; rather what is stored for them in paradise they will know in the hereafter, but the *Qur'an* has not negated anything for the women. The only reason the maidens are mentioned explicitly in the *Qur'an* is because when men were addressed in that period, they were told those descriptions explicitly; this is the context of those verses.

An objection based upon this that the atheist has, is that the Qur'an mentions paradise as being gardens and rivers, was this done to lure Arabs who had lived in the deserts all their lives?

This is an objection brought up by the Orientalists; that the *Qur'an* mentions gardens and rivers. Gardens and rivers in paradise they say, only to lure the Arabs because they lived in deserts all their lives. This claim is not true; we respond to this claim by saying that in every age, there are luxuries which people become accustomed to in different cultures. For instance, in this day and age, we have certain luxuries which people in the previous generation did not have, but a generation later, these things will not be considered a luxury, they will have new luxuries. So, in every generation there are luxuries which change from time and place. But there are certain things that are common to all human beings that will never change with time. Those things are nature, the beauty of gardens, the beauty of rivers, the beauty of homes. So, the *Qur'an* mentioned those things, because these are common to the entire humanity, there is no exception. So, if the *Qur'an* only mentioned those aspects of Paradise which were luring the Arabs in that time, many things would have been mentioned which would be specific to the Arabs of that time. We would read them in the *Qur'an* and think now that it is not a luxury. But *Allah* ﷻ mentioned gardens and rivers and houses, in order that as the ages go by, these things stay common to all of humanity. So, the reason for mentioning gardens, rivers and houses in Paradise is not because the *Qur'an* was luring the Arabs specifically at that time. So, this claim of the Orientalists does not stand.

Is the Qur'an a book of science? If not, why not?

The *Qur'an* is a book of guidance. A book of guidance relating to the salvation of humanity, this is the purpose of the *Qur'an*, as mentioned, the subject matter of the *Qur'an* is one. The subject matter of the *Qur'an* is to bring humanity to worship *Allah* ﷻ, or in

order to give humanity guidance and salvation. The purpose of the *Qur'an* is not science; we do not take scientific theories from the *Qur'an*. And if so, why not? The answer is simple. **Allah** ﷻ granted humanity faculties, the five faculties. With these five faculties, every human being is able to determine empirical and observable facts, and make investigations for himself, to the extent that even scientific progress that we have today has been made due to the efforts of humanity; humans have made effort and **Allah** ﷻ has granted them the success of attaining scientific knowledge. If **Allah** ﷻ revealed scientific knowledge in the *Qur'an*, every human being, when asked 'Why do you believe in the atom?' will respond by saying it was revealed to us by **Allah** ﷻ. Will such a human being go out his way to make progress in science? He will not; so, **Allah** ﷻ has left humanity to make scientific progress, he has given them that capability. The purpose of the revelation was not to advance people scientifically, but rather to give morals, ethics and guidance regarding the hereafter, and salvation in the hereafter. The purpose was not scientific research because every human being is able to make scientific research; this is not limited to one civilisation or one group of human beings; scientific research is common to all of humanity. So, the purpose of the revelation of the *Qur'an* is not to be a book of science, and **Allah** ﷻ has left humanity to make scientific progress for themselves.

Does a human being have a choice in belief and disbelief? If so, why are some people born into Muslim families and others are not?

The first question, whether we have choice in belief or disbelief, the answer is yes. When we say a human being has no choice, that relates to those things in which they have no determination, for instance the family one is born into, the height one will grow to, when one will die, what nationality one belongs to; human beings do not have a choice in these things and will not be questioned regarding them. A human being is questioned regarding those things in which they have clear choice. **Allah** ﷻ has created choice inside the human being, but the choice is limited, and the human being is only asked regarding that choice according to his limited capacity. For instance, if there is a human being dying in a desert and he consumes some swine; he saves himself from the pangs of death upon eating the swine, will this person be questioned regarding eating the flesh of swine? No, because he was dying. So, the choice that human beings are questioned regarding is limited, regarding those actions where he has a clear choice and he is not forced to do anything. Yes, **Allah** ﷻ creates that choice for him, meaning the ability to do so. This is why the *Qur'an* states **'You have no will, unless Allah ﷻ wills for you'**, meaning **Allah** ﷻ creates the power of selfdetermination within you. Like He created your eyesight, you are able to look right and left and are able to observe things, **Allah** ﷻ created will power inside a human being, and **Allah** ﷻ has given him the ability to earn actions. So, if we pick up something, this is done by choice; we will be asked regarding our choice of belief and disbelief.

Based on this, some people ask the question: *What is the judgement regarding a person who has not heard of Islam?*

The *Qur'an* states, **'we will never punish, until we dispatch a Messenger'**, meaning when the message of the one true Creator, the message of Islam, the person is legally obligated to believe, but who is exempt from this punishment? For instance, in our Shari'ah law, a child who dies, and his parents were non-believers, such a child will not be punished by *Allah* ﷻ. So, children are exempt, as well as mentally ill people. Thirdly, a group of people who have never heard of Islam, they are not tasked to believe as they have not heard of Islam, they have never heard of the *Qur'an* or the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ. So, who is left? People who are mature, have sanity, their faculties are working - their sight is working, their hearing is working, they can hear and understand the message of Islam - when the message of Islam reaches those adults, they are obligated to believe. Then these people are two categories. One category are those people who have understood Islam and refuse to accept, they are still disbelievers. A second category who have the opportunity to learn about Islam and still refuse, both of these groups will be punished forever. The first because they understood and rejected, the second because they have an opportunity to find out and they refused. For instance, many former Muslims, people who left Islam, if you invited them to this gathering of ours, they will refuse to come. If they had an opportunity to meet and discuss with me, they will refuse. Once they make that choice, *Allah* ﷻ will bar them from belief, because they have made that choice themselves. But, if they themselves choose to come and learn the truth and seek answers, *Allah* ﷻ will guide them. So many of them discuss with people who are not learned with *Islam*, so many of these types of questions. But when the person will say that he is unable to answer the questions and that he will take the individual to someone who can answer the questions, they refuse. So, it is by choice that they are choosing to disbelieve. Also, these people who choose to disbelieve, why are they punished forever? Someone may say that they could have been punished for a short period of time, why are they punished forever? The reason being that disbelief is such a crime that if someone were asked, an atheist is asked, 'if you saw the Almighty, will you still believe?' they will say no. For instance, Christopher Hitchens, a famous atheist said, 'Even if I see God I will not believe in him'. So, such a person, if he lived forever, and even if he had the vision of the Divine - which a disbeliever will never have - he clearly said himself, that he will still refuse to believe. Now such a person who, if lived forever will continue to disbelieve, therefore he is punished forever. Unlike the sin of drinking alcohol; if someone drinks alcohol and becomes intoxicated, the sin lasts for a moment and then the person resumes normality after the state of intoxication goes away, the sin lasted a moment so he is punished for a moment, and even then, he may not be punished because the Divine mercy is so great. Because, as Muslims, and atheists should know this, we believe if a person commits a sin, it is not counted for six worldly hours in case the person chooses to repent, and even if it is written down, one sin is written, whilst when a person intends to do a good deed, *Allah* ﷻ orders the angel to write down one good deed, when he carries out the good deed, *Allah* ﷻ orders the angel to write down ten good deeds. Then

those good deeds negate the bad deeds. So, the mercy of **Allah** ﷻ is vast, except for the disbeliever. If someone says okay, he disbelieved, but when he is resurrected on the day of judgment he chooses to believe, why does he still be punished forever? The answer is that such a person, when he is resurrected on the day of Judgement, if he was returned back to earth he will still remain a disbeliever. **Allah** ﷻ mentions this in the Qur'an, that this type of disbelief is such that a person who chooses to disbelieve and dies on disbelief, if **Allah** ﷻ returned him back to earth, which will not happen, he will still choose to disbelieve. This is why they are not given a second opportunity; the opportunity is there for them once they have reached the age of maturity and have sanity, their faculties are working and they heard the message of Islam. Let's say someone is confused that they heard Muslims are terrorists and Muslims are paedophiles and Muslims are all these evil crimes that you can think of that Muslims are accused of today, this non-Muslim hears about Islam but when he is given the opportunity to attend a lecture about Islam where he will learn about and can ask questions in that lecture, and he still refuses, has he chosen disbelief for himself? Of course, he has. This is why even that category of people also fall into the category of disbelievers. But the category of people that are exempt are those people who have never heard of Islam, have never heard of the Qur'an, and have never heard of the **Messenger of Allah** ﷺ 'Why are some people born into Muslim families and others are not?' On the day of Judgement, so many people will be resurrected, that were born into Muslim families but will be resurrected as disbelievers, and people will be shocked at that, they will be shocked simply because outwardly a person shows Islam, inwardly, if he has doubt regarding Islam or regarding some belief in Islam, does such a person remain a Muslim? A person has doubt regarding his faith, doubt regarding the existence of **Allah** ﷻ, such a person does not remain a Muslim. But, outwardly amongst people he acted like a Muslim, and then he died; people will think he died as a Muslim, they will pray his funeral prayer, but on the day of Judgement he will be resurrected as a disbeliever. So, there is no better opportunity for someone who is born in a Muslim family, because once he grows up he has the choice of believing and disbelieving. In the same way, a person born in a non-Muslim family, once he becomes mature, he will hear about Islam, he's only tasked to believe in Islam once he hears about it and is mature so that he can make the choice. Who says that once a person accepts **Islam** they must cut off their entire family? If someone becomes a Muslim, he has faith, he simply prays five times a day and avoids those things which are prohibited, which are only a handful of things, which any sane human being will avoid; such as lying, cheating, backbiting, slander, jealousy, hatred, rancour, these are the inward sins, and the outward sins he will avoid adultery, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, stealing etc. He will avoid those things, accept Islam, attempt to pray five times a day and will keep ties with his non-Muslim family, stay good with them. He will not take part with their religious activity but will keep links apart from that. So, this person still has the same choice as a person born in a Muslim family; when he is 15 he chooses to believe or disbelieve. Some openly disbelieve and others choose to hide their disbelief; this is why many outward Muslims will be resurrected as disbelievers, because inwardly they will not believe in **Allah** ﷻ. So, there is no better opportunity for someone born in a Muslim family, and someone born in a non-Muslim

family; both are only tasked to believe once they are mature adults, and they have their own mind.

Why didn't Allah ﷻ just create us and leave us without a law?

This is what deists believe. Deists are people who believe **Allah ﷻ** created everything and left it, a bit like a clock; a person makes a clock and leaves it be. The deists believe that God created the universe and left it. So, some people ask, why did **Allah ﷻ** not just create us and leave us without a law, why do we need law? Because so many people choose to disbelieve, simply because of the Shari'ah law. But I will tell them, if you choose to believe in **Islam**, the **Qur'an** and **the Messenger of Allah ﷺ**, but to not follow the law of Islam, you still remain a believer, you will still have the opportunity to be saved. But a person who chooses to disbelieve, he remains in hellfire forever. So, the choice of belief does not involve practice, it is additional. If someone commits a sin in Islam, he does not become a disbeliever, he remains a believer, even though he is sinful. But, **Allah ﷻ** will still give him salvation after he is punished for his sins, if he is punished at all. Every human being, the way **Allah ﷻ** has created humanity is such that every human being has been given ability, ability of the mind. The way **Allah ﷻ** has created humans is that they are able to build civilisations, roads, and in the modern age aeroplanes and cars, and in previous history pyramids. Such a human being with such a mind that **Allah ﷻ** has granted, if this human is left with the intellect alone, with no limitations and no law, what will the person start doing on earth? This person will become like the Pharaoh, committing oppression on others because he will consider himself god on earth; being able to kill all the animals; in the UK we had black adders, the snake that is native to this country, but the UK killed off the black adder, and the jaguar, and yet they call for preservation of wildlife in Africa. So, the way humanity is, they would kill animals, destroy the planet and harm other human beings, so **Allah ﷻ** has told us by giving the Divine law, that you have been given this intellect, but the human being in his actions must have restrictions, that he does not harm the intellect or its rights. This is why a human being is in need of Divine law.

What does a Divinely revealed law protect?

Today, in the modern age, certain segments of the media would want us to believe - on this read Noam Chomsky's work 'Manufacturing Consent' - that the Shari'ah law is simply about placing the face veil on the women, lashing people, and amputating hands, this is what they would want us to believe that the Shari'ah law is. In other lectures, I have

covered hudud, the corporal punishments, women's' rights in Islam so we will not go into detail today. What I want to mention here is what the Shari'ah law protects are five things:

Number one, it protects belief. Some may say it only protects the belief of Muslims, this is untrue; Islam, even though it intellectually opposes the other religions and states it is the only truth, whenever was victorious in any nation in the past, especially in the times of the companions of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ it preserved the religious minorities. For instance, when the companions conquered Syria, half the nation remained disbelievers at that time; even now, Syria has a sizeable number of non-Muslims. In Egypt, the Muslims protected the Copt minority. The greatest living evidence of this is the minorities that live in those countries to this day today. This only changed after the stability of the Muslim empires was uprooted, the last empire being the Ottoman empire. Towards the end of the Ottoman empire, when colonialist powers came in, and Arab nationalism and nationalism in all its forms, discord started in the Muslim world amongst minorities. So, the first thing Islam protects is freedom of belief; someone may say that this is contradicted by the apostate law; the apostate law is similar to the law of treason and is only carried out by the ruler when he deems the apostate a danger to society. So, the apostate law is nothing, in reality, to do with freedom of choice, because the person has the choice to leave the Muslim country and become an apostate in a non-Muslim country. But the fact that he chooses to apostate within a Muslim community and country, may be an act of treason; the ruler determines this and therefore carries out the apostate law. Number two, life. For instance, capital punishment is given for someone who murders. Why is capital punishment given? In order to preserve life. It is, in effect, a deterrent for people killing; that people would know before killing that the state will intervene and they will lose their own life for taking that of others. Number three, wealth. Now, someone may say the law of amputating the hands is harsh, but the response to this is firstly that the amputation of the hand has its regulations, it cannot be carried out willy-nilly, someone just wants to amputate the hand of someone who is accused of stealing, no. The law is applied by the ruler. Laws need to be harsh in order for it to be a deterrent. How would something remain a deterrent if the laws are not harsh? Secondly, the conditions are so difficult to be met that it is very rarely carried out, if carried out with the regulations mentioned by the Shari'ah. Number four, the lineage and honor of people. The Shari'ah law does this by outlawing fornication and adultery. Number five, the mind and intellect. It does this by banning alcohol and drugs. The *hadith* of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ, '**All intoxicants are prohibited**'.

So, the response to this question is that any divinely revealed law will have these five principles in mind. When we look at the law, we will find that the Shari'ah protects any one of these five principles.

Why do Muslims worship the Ka'bah?

Muslims do not worship the **Ka'bah**, they direct their prayers to it due to the metaphysical belief that the prayer takes a form in the spiritual realm, in the world of similitudes, and those prayers ascend from the central point which is the **Ka'bah**, so they direct their prayers towards that central point. Also, this unites and gathers the congregation; if everyone decided to pray in different directions, how would we congregate people for one prayer? Yes, Muslims do venerate the **Ka'bah**, but veneration is not worship. Venerating something is treating it with honor and respect, we make a distinction between worship, which includes belief that the one being worshipped is the Creator and Provider, and between venerating. So, we venerate the **Ka'bah** and do not worship it.

Someone may say why doesn't *the Shari'ah law be determined by the people and why don't we have a secular law?*

Every human being will have his own thoughts, that we need to do away with this law, this law is too harsh, we need to relax this law, we need to bring in a harsher punishment; who will draw the boundaries? This is why secularism is un-Islamic, unacceptable. As Muslims, we believe in Shari'ah law. In a Muslim society, Shari'ah law must be implemented by the Muslim ruler. But why do we not accept secular law, or a change to Shari'ah law? Simply because every individual will have his own thoughts; one may say I think the Shari'ah law should amend this, another person, according to his own desires, would want another thing to change, therefore the law is not secular. In a Muslim society, they are tasked to placing Shari'ah law.

Does Islam allow freedom of thought and belief? if so, doesn't this contradict the precepts of jihad and apostate law?

If we look at early Muslim history, within cities like Kufa and Basra in the first 200 years of Islam, you had every sect and religion debating in the mosques of the two cities. They were allowed to form their own circles and question, and the scholars would answer their questions. Not once, in Sunni rule, did the rulers ever enforce their beliefs on the civilians. It happened during the Mu'tazilite rule, a sect, who claimed they have intellectual superiority, that has dwindled now, they enforced their beliefs on others, that they arrested Imam Ahmad and others, and lashed him in public, a Sunni Imam. But when Sunni rulers ruled, when they were governing, they did not enforce their beliefs on others, but they did dialogue with them, they debated with them. So, Islam allows freedom of expression, but the difference between Islam and other religions is that our claim is that Islam is able to intellectually defeat any ideology. The legislation of jihad, in itself, was calling people to

Allah, this is what jihad meant. **Allah** ﷻ states, '**Struggle against them with it [the Qur'an] a major struggle**', what struggle is this? An intellectual struggle. Later on, when the Muslims migrated from *Makkah al-Mukarramah* to *al-Madinah al-Munawwarah* and a Muslim community was formed, the non-Muslims attempted to harm the Muslims militarily, so **Allah** ﷻ legislated jihad with weapons. So, in its essence, jihad was legislated to protect Muslims. Of course, there is a whole history to this, someone may ask why the conquests were carried out. We would say that the conquests were carried out to emancipate people in other countries, this is a debatable issue, because some believe that jihad was legislated to enslave people. As for the apostate law, it is sufficient what I have mentioned that the apostate law is similar to the law of treason and is only carried out by the ruler.

Why doesn't Islam allow homosexuality as it is found in nature?

This question has become a major question among former Muslims who choose to be homosexual and leave Islam, or some people who choose to be homosexual and still claim to be Muslim, they ask why does Islam not allow homosexuality when it is found in nature, it is a natural desire. The response to this is that homosexuality is a desire, a male for a male or a female for a female. Sexuality, or sexual desire has been placed inside of the human being for procreation. **Allah** ﷻ has created human beings as such that if **Allah** ﷻ did not place sexual desire inside human beings, they will not procreate; why will the woman put up with the man and why would the man put up with the woman? So, **Allah** ﷻ created this desire in them, so they will tolerate one another and procreate. This desire, some men and women do not have for the opposite sex. Some of them will claim that they have desire for the same gender, others will have a desire for children - which is known as paedophilia - others will have a desire for animals which is known as bestiality, others will have even a desire for dead bodies, known as necrophilia. So, all these different desires, where do we draw the line and who draws the line? So, **Allah** ﷻ legislated marriage between man and woman and told us all these other desires which people may have are prohibited. This is why the **Qur'an** has prohibited homosexuality, and unfortunately, there are groups of people who have attempted to validate homosexuality in Islam, they are unable to do so. And even those people who have chosen this as a way of life, again, I say to them that they must dialogue with us, come to these types of gatherings, present their doubts regarding the issue, and we will respond to it accordingly, but in short this is the response.

ATHEIST AND NON-MUSLIM OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

When discussing atheism in the modern context, many objections are brought up regarding the *Qur'an*. Generally speaking, Atheists may discuss Christianity, the Bible; especially in the West because we are living in a post-Christian, Western society, so people are mainly familiar with the Bible. But now with the influx of Muslim immigrants and people accepting Islam in the West, as well as the political climate where there is a clash of nations and some of those nations happen to be Muslim, people are questioning the contents of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*, the Prophetic sayings of the *Prophet* ﷺ

So, the inception of this discussion will be from the contents of the *Qur'an* in relation to things like slavery, jihad and corporal punishments, as well as other subjects. I decided to carry out this lecture in the form of a catechism which is questions and answers. In the *Qur'an*, we have the mention of slavery. So, the first question would be: How would a Muslim in the 21st century justify slavery being found in his or her holy book, the *Qur'an*. This is a question which many Muslims will ask themselves also, that why does the *Qur'an* mention slavery, for instance 'Whatever your right hand possesses'. Even Nick Griffin, the former leader of BNP, mentioned on the BBC that the *Qur'an* mentions 'What the right hand possesses'. So how, as Muslims, do we respond to this? When we look at the context of the revelation of the verses of the *Qur'an*, the *Qur'an* was revealed in a Pagan Arabian society in which slavery was prevalent, slavery was deep rooted. That when one tribe would fight another tribe, they would take captives and make slaves of them. They would make slaves of the women, the children as well as the men, and in some cases behead them. In this context, the *Qur'an* was revealed and the verses that were relating to slavery were in the context of many people possessing slaves; it was not because the *Qur'an* was legislating slavery, there is a difference between the two. The verses of the *Qur'an* that related to slavery were in the context of people owning slaves and then *Allah* ﷻ revealing verses on how to deal with those slaves; this is why throughout the *Qur'an* you have verses which mention emancipating slaves, freeing slaves. But there is no

mention of any verse which forced slavery upon people; those verses that mention the captives of war relate to something which scholars term as Ahkam as-Sulta and this term is very important. Ahkam as-Sulta is legislation of governance. There are many verses throughout the Qur'an where the Qur'an is addressing the rulers. The verses of slavery are in that context that when the first battle occurred, *the battle of Badr*, the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) was given a choice with regard to the captives. This choice was either to take the ransom for each slave, have the slaves killed, keep them as slaves without killing or taking ransom, or emancipate them, free them; these are four choices which the Qur'an gave. Which choice do we know, as Muslims, that the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) made? If you read the *Seerah*, the biography, which choice did the Messenger of Allah make? Are you familiar? Do you know which choice? In the Battle of Badr, no one is familiar? The *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) made the choice of freeing the slaves for a ransom, this is well known. But the *Qur'an* left these four choices, why? Because the context of the revelation of those verses was that people would take Muslim captives, decapitate them, or keep them as slaves; so, the Qur'an left the choice to the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) that what you deem fit, in this particular context, you carry out. So, after the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ), if the ruler sees that the benefit is in taking prisoners of war, then he takes prisoners of war; and if the enemy enslaves the Muslim prisoners of war, then the ruler has the choice also to enslave the prisoners of war.

But at this point, the question would be asked, did the *Qur'an* legislate slavery as such that the type of slavery we conceive when we think of the Africans on the cotton plants in America? The answer would be that pre-Islamic Arabia had such slavery. But after the revelation of the *Qur'an*, *Allah* ﷻ and the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) gave the slaves rights to such an extent that the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) said that the master and the slave must eat the same food, and they must wear the same clothing, as well as if the master burdens the slave with more work than required, the slave had the right to go to the administration, the judge, and make a complaint against his master. So, the master was not permitted to burden the slaves with more work than permitted. At the same time verses of the *Qur'an* were revealed where *Allah* ﷻ ordered the believers to free slaves; for instance, in the *Qur'an*, if a Muslim takes an oath by the name of *Allah* ﷻ and he breaks that oath, the *Qur'an* orders him to free a slave. If a Muslim kills an individual by accident, which is known as manslaughter, the *Qur'an* orders him to emancipate a slave. So there are different verses throughout the *Qur'an* where *Allah* ﷻ orders the believers to emancipate and free slaves. So, this was not a case of *Islam* legislating slavery where there was no slavery, rather the Qur'an was revealed in a place where slavery was entrenched and rooted in that society; so those verses are in that context. But the *Qur'an* did not completely abrogate slavery at that time, because if those slaves had been freed at one go, the non-Muslims at that time were taking Muslims as slaves, that in effect would mean that Muslims would remain as slaves, and the nonbelievers, who were aggressive to this new religion which they were not familiar with, those non-Muslims would have been freed and Muslims would have remained as prisoners and slaves. But at the same time, the

Qur'an gave those slaves rights, for instance they were not to be tied with ropes, they were not to be beaten; so, this was the context of verses regarding slavery in the **Qur'an**.

In the 21st Century, if a person picks up those verses without looking at the context, the verse before and the verse after - and this is very important because the **Qur'an** is unlike the Bible. The Bible consists of numerous books and those books were written at different periods of time, over centuries; the **Qur'an** was revealed within 23 years, and we would say as Muslims that the **Qur'an** is the Divine speech of **Allah** ﷻ. A non Muslim, an Atheist would say that the **Qur'an** is the speech of the **Prophet of Islam** ﷺ. But we as Muslims would say that it is the Divine speech of **Allah** ﷻ. The subject matter of the **Qur'an** is one, what is that subject matter? That would be calling humanity to the worship of the one true Creator. Because the subject matter of the **Qur'an** is one, and it was revealed upon one person, it is necessary for an individual when discussing the context of the **Qur'an**, to look at different verses of the **Qur'an** from different chapters, rather than from one chapter. For instance, if you quote a verse relating to jihad or a verse relating to slavery, it would be important to look at all the necessary verses relating to slavery throughout the **Qur'an**, rather than just looking at the verse relating to slavery in one chapter alone. So, this is what is meant by context, so for instance if someone sits on a TV show and they only present one verse of the **Qur'an** relating to jihad, this decontextualises the **Qur'an**. Whenever an individual quotes the **Qur'an** on a given subject, it is important that they be familiar with all the verses relating to that subject within the **Qur'an**, otherwise they decontextualise the verses of the **Qur'an**. So, going back to what I mentioned which was *Ahkam as-Sultah*, judgements of governance, or rulings relating to governance; this is important when understanding verses of the **Qur'an** which relate to governance or verses of the **Qur'an** which relate to corporal punishments, or verses of the **Qur'an** which relate to jihad.

Jihad in the Qur'an, why was Jihad legislated?

When we look at the **Qur'an** itself, within *Surah al-Furqan*, a chapter of the **Qur'an** which was revealed in *Makkah al-Mukarramah*. Because the life of the Messenger of Allah was divided into two periods during announcement of Prophethood; 13 years in *Makkah*, and ten years in *al-Madinah alMunawwarah*. Jihad with weapons was legislated after the migration from *Makkah al-Mukarramah* to *al Madinah alMunawwarah*. So the first verses relating to jihad were revealed in *Makkah al-Mukarramah* where **Allah** ﷻ orders the Messenger of Allah(ﷺ) 'and struggle against them with it - meaning the **Qur'an** - a major struggle' this was the first order relating to Jihad. In this verse, the first verse relating to jihad, the *Messenger of Allah*(ﷺ) was ordered to struggle against the disbelievers with the **Qur'an**, this was not an order to struggle against them with weapons, but to contextualise the warfare in *al-Madinah al-Munawwarah*, which was with weapons, when we look at the **Qur'an**, if you look at *Surah al-Ma'idah* verse 51, where **Allah** ﷻ

orders the believers not to take the Jews and Christians as allies, and this verse is oft-quoted, that the **Qur'an** orders the believers to not take the Jews and Christians as allies. If you take this verse alone, and even if you look at the verse prior and after it, the context will not be clear unless you look at the different verses relating to jihad. For instance, in Surah Number 60 of the Qur'an, verses 1 to 9, you will find that **Allah** ﷻ mentions that the believers will have love for a group of Christians, and will have love for a group of the people of Ahl al-Kitab, people of the Book meaning Jews and Christians, and the Qur'an specified that the people that they have been ordered to fight are those that persecuted them once they migrated to **al-Madinah al-Munawwarah**. So, these verses contextualise those verses which people quote alone, and this happens many times, people will quote one verse without looking at all of the verses relating to jihad or relating to politics within Arabian society at that time. In **Surah al-Hajj**, Chapter 22 of the **Qur'an**, verses 38 to 40, the **Qur'an** mentions specifically that legislation of fighting in the way of **Allah** ﷻ has only been given to remove persecution; because the Muslims were persecuted, **Allah** ﷻ legislated for them a means of self-defence, this means of self-defence is known as jihad. After the revelation of these verses giving permission to fight, the Qur'an revealed different verses relating to jihad, for instance **Surah at-Tawbah** which is Chapter 9 of the Qur'an, **Surah al-Anfal** which is chapter 8 of the **Qur'an**, these chapters were revealed after the legislation, the permission given to fight, detailing the legal rulings pertaining to battle and warfare. So, what people tend to do is quote those verses that relate to battle and warfare,

without mentioning the verses that mention what context those verses relate to; because clearly, from the references I have given, those verses, and from the biography of the **Prophet** ﷺ we will know that the context of those verses was in order to remove persecution and to remove any oppression and for self-defence.

Of course, the question here comes regarding the Islamic conquest; if jihad was legislated for self-defence purposes, then why did the Muslims carry out conquests, why did they conquer different regions? Is Islam a religion that proselytizes with the sword? Because the famous hadith, Prophetic narration, of **the Messenger of Allah** ﷺ, 'I have been ordered to fight the people until they say "There is no God only **Allah**"', what is the context of this hadith? The response to this objection would be that the hadith answers itself; because the word is 'I have been ordered' 'an uqatil an-naas' - anyone who has a rudimentary understanding of Arabic will tell you that the verb uqatil is a verb which is used for two persons rather than one, which means 'I have been ordered to fight those who are fighting me'; so the correct translation of the Hadith would be 'I have been ordered to fight those who are fighting me, until they say "**la ilaha illa-Allah**". This is the correct interpretation of the hadith, because the verb is from muqatalah, which is when someone is reciprocating an action, so if someone attacks you and you fight them the back, this is called uqatil, 'I am fighting', as opposed to if you said '**aqtul**' meaning 'I killed', but if you say uqatil, it means 'I am fighting because someone is fighting me'. So, the context of the hadith was stated in the context when Muslims were ordered to fight in order to defend

themselves. As for the conquests after the demise, the passing of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ, the successors of the *Prophet* ﷺ who are known as the Caliphs, conquered different lands; they conquered Syria, they conquered Iraq and they conquered Egypt. Did they conquer these lands in order to proselytize with the sword? The answer would be no. What is the living proof of this? The greatest proof relating to this is the fact that in those lands, to this day, you have indigenous populations of Christians, and until recently in the formation of Israel, Jews also, who lived in those lands in peace and harmony. For instance, Yemen had a sizeable minority of Jews, some of whom have moved to Israel, Iraq had a sizeable number of Jews, Syria also had a sizeable number of Jews; when I was in Damascus, the Jewish quarter was still preserved, no one was allowed to live in the Jewish homes - the Jews had migrated to Israel - but the Jewish quarter was still preserved. And within those same countries, for instance in Egypt you have over 10 million Copts, the indigenous people of that area, and in Syria you have a sizeable number of Christians still living in areas like Bab Tuma, which is known as the Christian quarter of Syria, and in Iraq until recently where groups like ISIS displaced some of those Christians in Mosul, those Christians lived side by side with the Muslims. Now those Christians are not from the Western world, they are Arabs, or they are people indigenous to those countries. This is the greatest proof to show that the Muslim conquests were not done in order to proselytize Islam. At the same time, if you study the history of areas like Indonesia and Malaysia, and the Indian subcontinent, especially the south of India which contains tens and millions of Muslims, no Muslim army ever entered those countries. Where there were conversions by the tens and millions, no Muslim army ever entered those countries. For instance, in Kerala India, Yemeni traders entered that region and many people accepted Islam at their hands. So, the Islamic conquests were not about proselytizing. Someone may quote an incident for instance, that when *Sayyiduna Umar* (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him) conquered Alexandria which is in Egypt, *Amr ibn al-Aas* wrote a letter to him saying we have conquered Alexandria and there is a library which contains over 40,000 volumes; those volumes consist of works of philosophy, medicine, astronomy, different sciences, what shall we do with these books? The narration states that the *Caliph Umar* (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him) wrote that if those books contain what is in the Qur'an then we are not in need of them, and if they contain other than what is in the Qur'an, then we are not in need of them, so have them burnt. So *Amr ibn al-Aas*, according to this narration, had the volumes of this library disseminated throughout Alexandria in the public bath houses by which they would warm the water, and had them burnt. Christians and Orientalists, as well as Atheists love to quote this incident. How would we respond to this claim? We would respond by saying this incident has been recorded 600 years after *Umar* (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him), and in Islam we do not accept narrations which do not have a chain of narration back to the subject. If there is no chain of narration we do not accept those narrations. So, it is a historical inaccuracy to quote this. So many people like quoting this; this is just one example of how a person can make mistakes in the history with regard to their knowledge of the history of the Muslim world.

Moving on to hudud punishments. Hudud punishments in the Qur'an. Hudud punishments are corporal punishments. What do we mean by corporal punishments? Punishments which relate to lashing, stoning or anything of that nature. How many of you are aware regarding the stoning of the adulterer? How many of you know this is related to Islam? I would like to ask a question, is stoning of the adulterer mentioned in the *Qur'an*? Stoning of the adulterer is not mentioned in the *Qur'an*, no. Stoning of the adulterer is not mentioned in the *Qur'an* but it is mentioned in the hadith of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ. So again, the familiarity of the contents of the *Qur'an* is essential when discussing with Atheists or those who object to Islam, especially regarding corporal punishments. The argument would be that these punishments are outdated punishments, and secondly that the punishments are too harsh. Which punishments are mentioned for instance, severing the hand of a thief - if a person steals you sever off his hand in the verse in the Qur'an, ***'the thieving male and the thieving woman amputate their hand'*** - and also lashing for fornication, not adultery. So, the objection would be that these punishments are outdated and also too harsh. How would we respond to this claim? A third claim would also be the application of these punishments; are these punishments applicable in the 21st century? This is an objection. We will respond to the first objection by saying: a punishment being outdated or moving on with time, does not make that punishment invalid or void, for instance jails - having a jail cell - is a punishment which, if we check history, we check the Babylonian civilisation, we check the Persian civilisation, different civilisations, the Roman civilisation, we will find that they all used jail cells. This being from antiquity, does this mean that the punishment itself is invalid, no. So, this would be our response to the first claim. As for the second claim that the punishments are too harsh, we would say these punishments have been legislated as something which is there for stopping people from carrying out certain crimes, a prevention [deterrent]. It is not necessary that these punishments are carried out; for instance going back to the *Caliph Sayyiduna Umar* (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him). One day he was walking and he heard, from inside of the house of someone, raised voices, like the voices of those people who are intoxicated with alcohol. So, he climbed the wall and he attempted to enter the house; he was the Caliph. The man came out and said "you have done wrong, what have you done, you had suspicion", suspicion in Islam is forbidden. Secondly, you entered the precincts or the vicinity of my house, my courtyard, without permission, this is also prohibited. Thirdly, you attempted to break and enter into my house. It's a famous incident, what did *Sayyiduna Umar* (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him) do? He left the man as he is even though there was strong suspicion that he may be consuming alcohol. So, I would say that the problem the modern man has with hudud punishments is its application. That those who claim to apply the Islamic law in modern society or in modern times, they are not applying the law correct. For instance, the verse which states 'the thieving man and the thieving woman, sever their hands' this is a general statement; the rule is any general statement will have some specifics. What are the specifics? Again, going back to *Sayyiduna Umar* (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him), the Caliph Umar. Many of you would be familiar with the incident in

his Caliphate when there was a famine. What did *Sayyiduna Umar* (Allah ﷺ is pleased with him) do with those who stole food? Did he sever their hands or amputate their hands during that famine? The application of the law was withheld. Again, does this law apply to someone who steals food, even in times of prosperity; if someone steals food, does the law of the amputation of the hand apply to him? The answer would be no. Thirdly, if there are any doubts regarding the person or a simple denial from the person, is the government ordered to apply the hadd, the corporal punishment, if the person is in denial and there is a lack of evidence? The hadd punishment will not be applied. Because the hadith states, **'Avoid the corporal punishments with doubts'**. So for instance if a person is caught taking stolen goods out of a house, and at the time he was taking the stolen goods out of the house and he was found in such a state, when taken to court, the judge will not apply the hadd punishment simply because there is a doubt, perhaps he was taking the goods into the house as opposed to taking them out of the house. So, if the corporal punishments are difficult to apply, why are they there? They are there as a prevention, a prevention to crime [deterrent]. Does this mean that they are not carried out totally? No, they are carried out when the conditions are met; what we are saying is that those conditions are very rarely met. For instance, the punishment regarding a fornicator and an adulterer; very famously everyone knows that there must be four witnesses who observe the adulterer in his adultery. Apart from observing they must be very explicit with the detail, very explicit. To the extent that they must be able to describe the action of the two individuals in detail. If the account of any one of these four witnesses contradicts the other, all four of them will be lashed. So how does this law apply and what is it relating to? Of course, the application of this law relates to someone committing obscenity in a public area. Because the only way four people will congregate to see someone in such an action and be able to observe them in such detail, will only take place with public obscenity; if someone is doing this action in public and with such nakedness, that they are able to observe the two individuals. To the extent that if someone observes a male and female in a bed and four witnesses observe them in a bed, naked together, will the hadd punishment apply to them? The answer is no. Why will the hadd punishment not apply to them? Because they were unable to see the penetration of the act. Because they are unable to see penetration, it could be that the two individuals could be lying together in bed, naked; yes, they will be reprimanded, but will the hadd, the corporal punishment be applied to them? The hadd punishment will not be applied. So, the hadd punishment is relating to

actual public obscenity where the two people are unashamed and perform this act in public.

But then someone may say, we understand there are stringent rules for the application of these hadd punishments, we understand that in order that these hadd punishments be carried out, such stringent conditions must be met; but what is the purpose of such laws, such Divine judgements? The answer is that any legal ruling in Islam will preserve five

things. What are these five things? Number one, life. Number two, religion. Number three, wealth. Number four, lineage. Number five, honour or respectability of an individual; for instance if the tabloids, the type of tabloids we have in the Western world, if they tarnish the name of an individual, they will be held as culprits in an Islamic court, because it would be impermissible for them to publish certain things relating to someone's honour; this would be impermissible in Islam. But someone may say, what is the importance of preserving lineage? The answer is in order to preserve the family cohesion. If a child is born out of wedlock, or he or she is born from adultery, that child will be unfamiliar with their parent. The lack of familiarity with their parent, that parent has taken their right away from them. Because every child has the right to know who his or her parents are. This is why adultery and fornication are forbidden in Islam. And this is why a corporal punishment has been legislated in Islam. As for the other corporal punishments like theft, those are obvious to people as to why the punishment for theft has been legislated.

So, what about the case of rape? If there is rape, and there are not four witnesses - because in the media there were reports regarding cases in Pakistan and other countries, where a woman would be raped, and when she would take the case to court, she was unable to produce four witnesses to rape and therefore the rape cases were dismissed. So, in the media they reported this as the inadequacy of Islamic law to punish a rapist. How do we respond to this? The response is that the law relating to rape, if the woman is unable to produce four witnesses to the action of rape, the 'hadd' punishment will not apply to the rapist, the corporal punishment will not apply to the rapist, but does this mean the government does not apply any other form of punishment? The answer would be no; the government has the right to apply other forms of punishment like jail, or does this mean that Islamic law dismisses DNA evidence, or camera evidence? The answer would be no; DNA evidence would be taken into consideration, camera evidence would be taken into consideration, but they will be unable to apply corporal punishments on the person who commits the crime; corporal punishment would be impermissible but the government would have the right to legislate other laws for such criminals. So the legal judgements relating to corporal punishments are religious judgements, but does this mean a law cannot be placed by the government, of course not. The government has every right to punish criminals as they deem fit - of course lashing would be limited - this is known as 'ta'zeer' where the legislation of lashing is limited; the only way a person can lash is from Divine legislation. After this, another question that is commonly asked is the question relating to the apostate. The apostate law, which is well known, is that the apostate is killed in Islam. This is how it is stated. But in the 21st century, where we have freedom to read what we want, to think what we want, how does this law apply in a modern context, and is this a draconian law, a law which is medieval? The answer would be that this law is not a law unlike the law of treason; it is similar to the law of treason. The context of this law is that if there is a male, because the woman are not killed, and neither are the children, within the apostate law. If a male who lives in a Muslim society decides to leave Islam, the governor or the ruler of that region will determine: is this male individual committing treason and therefore declaring himself a non-Muslim? This action of treason is what the legislation is relating to; that if he is doing that as a political statement, and as

a threat to society, the punishment is mentioned as an apostate punishment that the person is killed by the governor, the government, not by individual vigilante groups. But if a person would want to leave Islam as a religion, he could always leave the Muslim country and declare himself as an apostate. The Muslim government would not have any authority over that person out of their borders, outside of their borders they would have no authority. After having said this, historically speaking, and currently speaking, have there been people in the Muslim world who declared themselves as non-believers yet they were unharmed by the society they lived in? The answer would be yes. If you check Muslim history, you will have multiple groups and religions of former Muslims who declared themselves non-Muslims and they even had the freedom to debate Muslim scholars. For instance, in the first 100 years of Islam, in the city of Basra and the city of Kufa, multiple debates would take place between Muslims and non-Muslims, or Muslims and former Muslims within the mosques. The government did not apply this law except on those individuals who were a threat to the state. A second reason as to why this law is applied is because if a man is married to a Muslim woman, has Muslim children, and then chooses to declare himself a non-Muslim, this leads to the breakdown of the infrastructure of the family, as well as the infrastructure of the society, and this is why this is counted as treason; but is the person killed straight away? The answer is no; the person is taken to court, goes through a trial process, is jailed, scholars will be brought in to discuss with him his reasons for leaving Islam, they will determine: are the reasons politically motivated? Then the final judgement will be left to the ruler. So, the law is not as clear as some may, including some Muslims, that anyone who leaves Islam is killed, so they attempt to apply this law outside a Muslim country, or within a Muslim country but doing this through vigilante means.

The same would apply here for the person who abandons the prayer; because someone asked in a previous lecture where I mentioned this apostate law, they said in Islamic Shariah, this also applies to someone who abandons the prayer, but the person who abandons the prayer is only punished if he is deemed as a non-Muslim, if he considers himself a non-Muslim. But in some schools of thought the action of abandoning the prayer is considered disbelief, so the same judgement would apply to him also, so the ruling of someone abandoning the prayer or rejecting the prayer is the same ruling as someone who apostates from Islam. Also, to clarify this, the killing of the apostate is carried out by the government which I mentioned at the beginning, this ruling is known as *ahkam as-Sultah*, judgements of the government; an individual has no right to apply this law. So, what about someone who blasphemes against the *Messenger of Allah ﷺ*? If someone blasphemes, and in the UK, we had the case of Salman Rushdie, when a fatwa was placed on him by the Iranian government and many clerics; the question would be is it an obligation to kill him? The answer would be that the judgement on Salman Rushdie would be the judgement of an apostate; someone who has left the fold of Islam. So, every individual Muslim is not tasked to carry out that punishment. So, someone may say why are Muslims exhorted or encouraged to kill someone like Salman Rushdie? The answer to this question would be that what people are confusing is that if someone kills a

blasphemer within a Muslim country, the person who carries out the attack, if the person he has killed was in fact guilty, then such a person is not killed in retaliation for having killed such a person. This is the meaning of the carrying out of killing a blasphemer; it does not mean that every Muslim is ordered to take up arms and kill the blasphemer. So, this is something which people are confusing today with regards to cases which happened throughout the Muslim world. At the same time, we would have to note that there are multiple misapplications of this law; for instance, in Pakistan, some Muslim killed a Christian; either a female or a male, they made the false accusation against the Christian of having insulted the *Qur'an*, or the *Prophet* ﷺ. So, the courts would have to determine, did this actually take place, and the person who was killed - were they killed unjustly - so these things relate to legislation and government.

Moving on to women's' rights in Islam. One commonly asked question is why is the inheritance law relating to women; that if a man or a female dies, the inheritance, the estate, the son gets double of what the daughter gets, is this not unfair, is this not a lack of equal rights for women in *Islam*? The answer to this would be, again, the legislation of inheritance laws in the *Qur'an* was revealed in a context, in a society, where women were not given any portion of the inheritance. When a person would die, the entire estate would go to the male children; the female child would not get a single portion of the inheritance. So over 1400 years ago, the *Qur'an* legislated that women get a portion; this is why the chapter in which this is mentioned is known as the chapter of Women, because it relates to rights of women. Secondly, why does the male child get double the portion of a female? The answer would be that the male child, in a Muslim society, has more financial responsibility, how so? When a male decides to get married in a Muslim community, the male must pay for the upkeep of the female bride, he must pay his dowry to the female bride and he must pay for her housing, to her required standards, her demands, not to how he deems fit; according to her standard. He must pay for her upkeep, a house, as well as her food, her maintenance; this all rests on the shoulders of the male. If the woman happens to be an earner, a woman who earns money, she has the right to keep her money and not take part in the expenditure of the house. She has the right not to pay for domestic things. So, if you have a couple, the woman is earning 50,000 a year and the man is earning 30,000 a year, the man must pay for the expenditure of the woman; she has the right to keep her money. This is why the inheritance of the male was double to the female, this is one reason.

Again, a second question which relates to the rights of women in Islam is the question of hijab, veiling. What is the woman ordered to cover?

The woman is ordered not to show her figure to those males who are not related to her. And this again relates to modesty, she is ordered to wear a jilbab, a piece of clothing that covers the shape of the breasts and the figure of the female, and this also includes the covering of the hair which is known as the hijab. *Can we enforce this hijab?* The answer would be no. We as individuals cannot enforce hijab upon the females. The

women are ordered to carry out the hijab by the creator, the *Qur'an* itself orders them to wear the hijab, and as believing women they are obligated to do so. But as males, is there any punishment mentioned in the *Qur'an* that if a female does not wear hijab she is punished, are you aware of any punishments? The answer is no. So, this is a religious obligation upon Muslim females to do, the order of hijab. Of course, there are some cultural things. It is very important to mention that when Muslims conquered different cultures, they very rarely interfered in their cultural practices. The Arab conquests covered certain lands; there were many religions and different cultures, the Arabs did not interfere in the cultures of certain people. Therefore, when you travel throughout the Muslim world, the cultures will differ within the Muslim world. But the religious order that is given to the woman is to wear the jilbab, which is covering those regions which I mentioned. It is a religious order by which the woman is commanded to do. Now, you may have heard of honor killings; honor killings, again, are a cultural thing. People who are from those cultures will be able to give you details relating to that, but it just happens to be that those cultures are dominantly Muslim; some of those cultures. Otherwise you have honor killings in other cultures which are not Muslim also, like in India where there are Sikhs and Hindus; but there are Muslims in the same region. Or amongst the Kurds, we know the Kurds accepted Islam over a thousand years ago, but they will have certain cultural practices which do not have a religious root.

At this point someone may ask regarding polygamy in the *Qur'an*; *why is the male allowed to marry four wives and the female prohibited from marrying more than once?*

The answer to this, we would think is obvious, but it is not in this day and age. If a man has four wives and he impregnates any one of those wives, it will be known who is the father and who is the mother. But, if a woman has four husbands, and she becomes pregnant, it will be very difficult to pinpoint who the father is. Someone may say we have DNA now; we can determine who the father is through DNA. The answer to that would be that it is impermissible for the sperm of different males to mix, so if one husband has intercourse with that same wife, and then the second husband has intercourse with her, this would be an impermissible act because of the sperm mixing; this doesn't happen when a male has four wives. But, the main answer to this conundrum for people, is that the context in which the *Qur'an*, the verse, which was revealed regarding marriages, the context in which it was revealed was, again, in the chapter relating to women, was that men in Arabian society would marry ten times, twenty times, multiple times; and they would divorce those women at one time, abandoning all the women. So, the legislation of the *Qur'an* came, stating, in the context of the Arabs of the society, 'Marry two, or marry three or marry four', and what does the verse state **'if you are unable to do justice amongst four, then marry only one'**. Everyone knows this, this is the context of the revelation; if you go and check the verse of the *Qur'an*, you will find this, that the *Qur'an* states **'Marry the women, two, three or four; if you are unable to do justice amongst multiple wives, then marry only one'**, they are ordered to marry only one. And then, in this context of Arabian society, where men would marry multiple times and treat the

women unequally, the **Prophet of Islam** ﷺ said '*that any man who marries twice, and does not do justice between those two wives, on the day of judgement will be resurrected half paralysed*', as Muslims we are aware of these things. But again, in a non-Muslim society, in 21st century Britain when these things are quoted, modern man or post-modern man is unable to fathom these things.

The question occurs at this point, *why did the Prophet of Islam* ﷺ *marry a young girl and consummate the marriage with a young girl who at the age of 9?*

In this day and age this is termed as paedophilia, and people have been known to insult the **Prophet of Islam** ﷺ on national television. Of course, Muslims find this very offensive. One person did say we have a right to insult; I would say to that that anyone who is a non-Muslim has the right to criticise, they have the right to criticise, and they are able to objectively criticise any religion, but as Muslim theologians or Muslim clerics we would say that we are able to respond to any criticism, this is the difference. So, a person does not have the right to mock or insult, but they have a right to critique. For instance, if we made a mockery of the Holocaust or we made a mockery of those who died in war, in World War 1 and World War 2, this would be insulting, and even in an Islamic state this would be prohibited; the government would prohibit this. But writing an objective academic paper on any subject would be permissible; as Muslims we would be able to respond. The answer to that objection regarding the **Prophet** ﷺ marrying a young girl, would be that in Arabian society at that time, a girl who had reached the age of 9 was not considered a girl, she was considered a woman, and anthropologists will tell you, whenever studying any culture or time, you do not apply modern standards upon a culture which existed hundreds of years ago; you do not apply modern standards. In that region and throughout many regions of the world, people considered girls as women once they passed the age of puberty; because they were mentally mature and they had passed the age of puberty, as well as the fact that it is not agreed upon that the age of **A'isha** (Allah ﷻ is pleased with her) at the time of consummation was nine, this is not something agreed upon by Muslim scholars. Some of them state she was 16, some state 18, because people in those times did not record dates of birth; and the fact that shows that she was very mature was that she was able to relate multiple historical events, and she was the most learned female scholar amongst the companions, that she was able to relate so many historical events. The **Prophet of Islam** ﷺ married a few women and those women were all women who were widows, or who had been divorced. The only young woman he married, who was unmarried prior, was **A'isha** (Allah ﷻ is pleased with her), who was the **daughter of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq** (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him). So, this incident that Zionist Jews tend to mention, and Christian Bible Bashers from the American Neocons, they tend to mention this to the extent that one senator mentioned this in the American white house in congress, he mentioned this. But they take this incident purely out of context.

Some people ask the question regarding the seven ways of reciting the **Qur'an**. They say if the Qur'an was revealed upon the **Prophet ﷺ**, why was it revealed in seven dialects, the **seven ahruf**. Firstly, we would have to define what the ahruf are. Ahruf is generally translated as dialects but some people would disagree with this translation. Over 40 different interpretations have been mentioned with regard to what the ahruf refer to; 40 different interpretations. The simplest interpretation is the following: that some words in the **Qur'an** will contain an additional letter when pronounced; for instance, everyone here have, or the majority of us, will have memorised **Surah al-Fatihah**. In **Surah al-Fatihah** we say '**maliki yawm ad-din**' or you can say '**maaliki yawm ad-din**'. The first recitation is '**maaliki yawm adDin**' with a stretch, and the second recitation is '**maliki yawm ad-Din**'. This is what simply the seven dialects refer to. That because the **Qur'an** was revealed amongst Arabs who had multiple dialects, the Qur'an was revealed amongst them, therefore the Messenger of Allah allowed the people to recite the **Qur'an** in seven dialects. These seven dialects were then transmitted with the **Qur'an** to our times today, through the **Qira'at**. Of course, scholars even differ as to the precise meaning of the ahruf, but one of the best interpretations is that it refers to additional letters, or the removal of letters. But none of the **Qira'at**, the recitations, contradict one another in meaning. If you observe all the **Qira'at**, the recitations of the Qur'an, none of them contradict one another in meaning. Of course, this deserves a deeper discussion relating to the sciences of the **Qur'an**.

What then with regard to ahl adh-Dhimma? How many of you are aware of who ahl adh-Dhimma are?

'Ahl adhDhimma' are the minorities that live in the Muslim world. In today's day and age this is portrayed that the nonMuslim minorities are oppressed, or were oppressed in the Muslim world. How were they oppressed, or they would say more specifically, oppressed by the **Qur'an**, because the **Qur'an** charges them a tax, which is known as jizya; the jizya is a tax which they would have to give. How do we respond to this claim? We respond to this claim firstly, that the very word ahl adh-dhimma means people of protection, meaning the people are protected. Who are they protected - because the word dhimma means responsibility, that these people, this minority of people that live in the Muslim world, are a responsibility of the state, the state must protect them; that is why they are referred to as being ahl adh-Dhimma. *Is it necessary that we use the term ahl adh-Dhimma?* The answer is no; because in the time of the **Caliph Sayyiduna Umar (Allah ﷻ is pleased with him)** some of the minorities requested that we will give the jizya meaning the tax, but we will not call it the jizya, and we will not be referred to as ahl adh-Dhimma and he allowed this. But why do they give a tax? The answer is that the Muslim government must protect this group of nonMuslims; protect them from Muslims and protect them also from any foreign invasion. The upkeep of maintaining that protection is termed as being jizya.

While Muslims will also have to give certain taxes to the state also, it does not mean that Muslims are exempt from giving taxes; and also, Muslims would have to be conscripted into the army, ahl adh-Dhimma are not conscripted in the army. So, if this was a Muslim country, the non-Muslims would not be conscripted and the Muslims would be conscripted. They would have to do obligatory service within the army, but the non-Muslims would be protected. So, this is the correct meaning of jizya and ahl adh-Dhimma.

Now the reason why I mentioned all of these things, is because when discussing atheism or discussing with Atheists, and any Atheists who will listen to this, they must not decontextualise these legal rulings of the *Qur'an*, in order to form an argument. When we discuss the existence of a Creator, these legal rulings are red-herrings which are placed by the Atheists in order to distract the subject, because the real subject is 'Does God exist?' they will say the God of the *Qur'an* does not exist. Why? Because we disagree with all of these things which I have covered. There are many other things which we can cover with regard to the content of the *Qur'an* and legal rulings contained in the *Qur'an*, but what I wanted to cover after this is theological or philosophical questions, not necessarily to do with the actual content of the *Qur'an*. One of those questions is: What if Islam does not reach a person, is such a person punished with a Divine punishment? The response to this would be from the *Qur'an*, that the *Qur'an* states, **'We will not punish until we send a Messenger'** meaning the message of *Islam* reaches those people and they choose to reject it. Now when we say message of *Islam*, what do we mean by the message of *Islam*? *Islam* does not mean only the revelation of the *Qur'an* or the hadith, *Islam* is the religion of humanity from the time of *Adam* (*upon him be peace*). So from the time of *Adam* (*upon him be peace*), the religion of *Islam*, or creed of *Islam* has remained. What Prophets and Messengers brought with them was Shari'ah which is a law; the laws would change with time, certain laws would change, but the creed is one. What is the creed? That there is only one God, a God who is perfect, free from imperfection. This was the creed. But the laws, legal rulings changed with time, and what we say with regard to *Islam* today that the last revelation of *Islam* is the *Qur'an* and the *Prophet of Islam* ﷺ. So, any one from those previous nations, prior to *Islam*, if the message of *Islam* reached them and they accepted *Islam*, they shall attain salvation. After the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ, who is the finality of *Prophets* (عليه السلام), if the message of *Islam* reaches someone, then they are obligated to believe. But if the message of *Islam* does not reach them, for instance people living in the Amazon, or aborigines who the message of *Islam* did not reach; even the message of the *Prophet* (ﷺ) that was sent to them. Because a *Prophet* (عليه السلام) is sent amongst every nation; prior to the last *Prophet* (ﷺ), a *Prophet* (عليه السلام) was sent to every nation. So, if the message of that *Prophet* (عليه السلام) reached that particular nation, then the message has reached them. But if there are people whom the message has not reached, such people will not be punished, because the *Qur'an* states **'We will not punish until we send a Messenger'**. So, the question here would be, *who then is exempt from*

the Divine punishment? Firstly, in Islamic doctrine, children are not punished. If a child dies, a child will not face divine punishment; whether that child is from a Catholic family, a Protestant family, a Hindu family, a Sikh family, a Muslim family, children are not considered legally obligated to believe in God. So, the punishment relates to adults; but *does this Divine punishment relate to insane adults?* The answer would be that if someone is insane, mentally ill, again, they are not legally obligated to believe, because they do not have the mental capacity to do so. In the same way, if you have someone who is born mentally handicapped, such a person is not punished in the hereafter. The punishment will only apply to someone whose five senses are intact, or if he is blind and can still hear, he hears the true message and fails to accept, then such a person is punished. But if a person is deaf and has sight, but is unable to rationalise the belief, then such a person is not legally obligated to believe, except to the extent to which he understands. So a question which the Atheists ask at this time is: Fair enough, you have a rational individual who chooses not to believe, but when he is resurrected in the hereafter, the afterlife, he observes the Divine power of God - remember he will not see God because the disbelievers will be barred from the vision of God - this is Islamic doctrine, but he will see angels and different things relating to the unseen, what if he chooses to believe then, *why is he eternally punished after this in Hellfire?* The *Qur'an* answers this also, in *Surah al An'am* verse 28, *Allah* ﷻ states, **'If they were returned back to Earth'** - because the *Qur'an* is describing an event in which people will be punished and they will say **'Oh Allah return us back to earth, we will believe in you'**, they will not see Allah but they will say **'Oh Allah return us back to earth, we will believe in you'**, *Allah* ﷻ informs us with His Divine knowledge, which is all-encompassing, that if such people were returned back to Earth, they will still go back to that which they were prohibited from. So this, in effect, shows that those people who face Divine punishment, or are punished for eternity, are those people that even after witnessing the signs of *Allah* ﷻ still choose to disbelieve. So the question the Atheist asks is *why is the punishment of hell eternal? Why does it not last for a short period of time? How would we respond?* We would say that this relates to the nature of the sin; that if someone drinks alcohol, intoxication lasts for a momentary time, a limited period of time, after which the person reaches sobriety. Therefore, the punishment is limited; of course, the person can repent, because the Atheists should know this, that if a Muslim commits a sin, we believe the sin is not taken into account for 6 hours; he has the chance to repent for six hours. After he performs the sin, he can still repent, and even after six hours he can still repent; if he performs a good deed, the good deed will wipe out the bad deed. So, many people face despair sometimes, they say if we become Muslim, our nature is to sin, there are certain sins that we cannot give up. By sinning, a person does not become a disbeliever, a person remains a believer. So by sinning a person does not leave the fold of Islam, but disbelief is such a sin that if someone who does not believe in God, does not believe in the *Qur'an*, does not believe in the *Prophet* ﷺ is asked, if you lived forever, will you remain a disbeliever, will you remain an Atheist - as Christopher Hitchens said - if I saw God, if I had the vision of God, I will still disbelieve in Him, so such a person is punished for eternity, because of the nature of the sin.

A question arises here, that do we have freedom of choice in the choice that we make, or do Muslims believe in determinism, meaning **Allah** ﷻ has pre-ordained for us that we will go to Hell therefore we are forced to go to Hell. The answer would be that we have freedom of choice, to make the choice. Like **Allah** ﷻ has granted the majority of us eyesight, with this eyesight we are able to look to the right, when we look to the right **Allah** ﷻ creates sight, vision. When we look to the left, **Allah** ﷻ creates vision. In the same way, He has given choice to every human being, that with choice they are able to carry out a certain action. But a person will never be punished for an action which he has no choice in; for instance, a person is in the desert and he has no food, no drink, he spots a swine or a boar, he kills the swine, he consumes some flesh of the swine. Will such a person be punishable in **Islam**? The answer is no, because he was forced to do so in order to live. A person is eating food, a morsel of food gets stuck in the throat, he takes a swig of alcohol in order to remove the morsel, is such a person sinful for taking that swig of alcohol? The answer would be no. So therefore, a person is only punished for those things in which he has choice. So, the disbeliever chooses to disbelieve and the nature of his disbelief is such that if he returns back to earth, he will still remain a disbeliever. So, the question that comes about after this is that if God knows what we will do and where we will end up, why does he not place us in Hellfire in the first place? The answer to that is firstly, the Divine knowledge of **Allah** ﷻ is not an attribute which forces someone to do something; it is what we refer to as *sifat al-kashifa* an attribute which exposes the unknown; God knowing does not mean that He will force us to do an action. But if He places people in Hellfire without them having done that action, those same people will say 'God why have you placed us in Hellfire and we have not done anything', so the answer would be that they will carry out their actions by choice. We do not believe that those actions are by compulsion, or by force. So, the question would be, what is the meaning of the verse of the **Qur'an**, **'You cannot will, except what Allah ﷻ has willed for you'**, what would be the correct interpretation of this verse? The answer would be that the meaning of this verse is that our freedom of choice is also with the will of God, how? That when we choose to do an action, **Allah** ﷻ creates that action for us. In the same way that when we look to the right, **Allah** ﷻ creates our vision, if we choose to pick up something, **Allah** ﷻ creates within us the action of being able to pick up something. This is the meaning of the verse 'You cannot will, except what **Allah** ﷻ has willed for you'.

Two more questions; *one is why were some people chosen to be born in Muslim families, and others chosen to be born in non-Muslim families? Does this not make the choice for some people easier for guidance and difficult for others? How do we respond to this?*

The response would be that firstly it is not necessary that anyone who is born into a Muslim family remains a Muslim. When the person reaches the age of puberty, he may pretend to be a Muslim but from inside he may be a disbeliever, he may choose to disbelieve and live amongst Muslims, which is known as hypocrisy. Such a person on the day of judgement will be resurrected as a non-Muslim. So being born in a Muslim family does not mean that a person will be necessarily guided, because the person will still have to make the choice, an informed choice. Secondly, the Divine creator, knowing who will believe and disbelieve, he chooses for believers a believing family, and for disbelievers a disbelieving family; but again, which disbelievers will be punished? Not all disbelievers because their children will not be punished; the people who are born as mentally ill amongst disbelievers will not be punished. Which disbelievers? Those who rationally make the choice of disbelief after having heard the message of Islam, and such people that if they returned back to earth after having seen the Divine punishment, they will still choose to disbelieve; such people are the ones who are punished.

The question after this is *why were we created?*

The answer to this would be that the *Qur'an* states: ***'I did not create Jinn kind and Humankind except to worship me'***. But some Atheists here will say why does this god of yours need worship? The response to this is that the meaning of the verse is not that the worship is needed by God, it is required for humanity; humanity are in need of worship, why? In order to attain knowledge of their creator; this is the purpose. So, for instance, sometimes a person may mention the goal or sometimes they may mention the means. In this particular verse, the means are mentioned; the goal is realisation and knowledge of the Divine creator, that is the purpose of life, to have knowledge and realisation of the Divine creator, His Divine attributes and His Divine existence.

Before finishing, there are some points I wanted to mention regarding evolution, because some people ask, *why do you disagree with the evolution theory when it is a scientific fact?* The response to this would be that we consider the evolution theory as an inductive hypothesis, which is accepted by the scientific community. Even though this inductive hypothesis is accepted by the scientific community, it does not mean it is not prone to change. The theory of evolution may face a paradigm shift at any given time. Because how science works is that if there is cumulative evidence against an established scientific theory, once that evidence reaches its boiling point, then scientific theory will face a paradigm shift. The evolution theory, being an inductive hypothesis, is one of those scientific theories that can face a paradigm shift at any given time. Reasons being, that the evolution theory does not make any qualitative predictions, any real predictions, unlike

other scientific facts or theories. For instance, the theory of relativity or Newton's inverse-square law, these scientific theories have something on the field which can be tested, or we can say quantitative predictions. Secondly, field studies report weak to non-existent effects. Field studies, observation; there is nothing to be observed in evolution. Thirdly, there are no plausible origins of life; to this day the evolution theory has not given any plausible reasons for the origin of life. We can also add to this regarding the fossil record, and the mathematical probability of the current fossil record and how many fossils should be found, and how many forms should be found. Atheists are familiar with these points that I am making, and they will not accept what I am saying, but I am giving the reasons as to why we do not accept the evolution theory as a fact. Irreducible complexity of organisms is not explained in the evolution theory. Species suddenly enter the fossil record and then disappear; if you check the fossil records you will find certain species which appear without a previous form, and then they disappear. So, this would make us conclude that these species are appearing fully formed all of a sudden. Computer replications have only been simulated without using classical Darwinian principles. Simulations that have been made in order to imitate the Evolution theory, those simulations that have worked have not used classical Darwinian principles; if they have, they fail to work. And of course, what I mentioned previously that evolution will one day face a paradigm shift, and an upheaval. So here I finish my lecture; if there are any questions, I will take questions from the audience.

Q&A

Is it an obligation on every individual to apply Shari'ah law?

Whether Islamic law is applied is determined by the ruler; so, if Queen Elizabeth II decides to accept Islam, then it is a religious obligation upon Queen Elizabeth to establish Islamic law. Of course, she'll face an upheaval from the British public but the obligation of applying Shari'ah law is the task of the ruler, not the task of vigilante groups; this is something that should be obvious but unfortunately is not.

In your opinion, are there any countries today that correctly apply the Shari'ah law?

My answer would be no; there are segments of Shari'ah law that are correctly applied. Such as family law, laws of inheritance, laws of marriage, personal law. But the abused domain of Shari'ah law is the hudud punishments, corporal punishments; and this has been mainly down to certain minority sects which are in power. And of course, we know that British Colonialists in the 1700s and later during the time of Lawrence of Arabia, supported those groups, after the demolishing of the Ottoman Empire they placed those groups in power. And those groups are applying a form of Shari'ah law which is in fact a misapplication. On whose shoulders does this lie? On the shoulders of the governments, Muslim or non-Muslim governments, not the general Muslim public.

(Relating to a case in Pakistan) A person by the name of Mumtaz Qadri killed the governor of Punjab. He was the personal bodyguard of that governor. What should the government of Pakistan do today with regard to the case of Mumtaz Qadri?

The response would be that that is for the scholars of that region to determine; they need to determine the judgement with regard to *Mumtaz Qadri* (رحمه الله) . It will become a legal case, which it currently is. And like any other case, it needs to go to court and not a vigilante group. This aspect is what is ignored by the crowd that is emotionally involved; that the case of *Mumtaz Qadri* (رحمه الله) , or any person who carries out an action of their own accord, this must be judged in a court, but like I said, is there a correct application of Shari'ah law in that country? I would say no. Pakistan, in fact, is a secular state with some segments of Islamic law; in reality Pakistan is a secular state with a secular elite ruling Pakistan.

Are there any books that you recommend?

There are a few subjects which I have touched upon, and the information is not from one source; so, there is not one book I can recommend regarding this subject.

The question is regarding the Big Bang theory which was first observed using the Hubble Telescope where they observed the light shift with the light reflecting red, and therefore they concluded that the universe is expanding. How does this fit in with *Islam*?

This in fact relates to another subject, which is the subject that do we interpret the *Qur'an* in light of modern science? The response would be no. We do not interpret verses of the

Qur'an in the light of modern science, even though the *Qur'an* does state explicitly that creation is being expanded; but do we interpret that verse which mentions 'to expand' in light of current scientific theories? The answer is no. Also, there are critics of theories like the Big Bang theory. So, if you do further reading; if you read 'The Deniable Darwin' of David Berlinski, in there he has some articles relating to criticisms of the Big Bang theory, and you can read the book of Paul Davies 'The Mind of God' or his other book 'The Goldilocks Enigma', these books are written by physicists. Or another good read is the work of Stephen Hawking, 'A Brief History of Time' which will give you an overview of these scientific theories. After reading these works, you will conclude that none of these are decisive theories; they can shift, they can face a paradigm shift, and to read on paradigm shifts, read the work of Thomas Kuhn 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions'.

The question is: that you mentioned that Jihad was legislated for defence purposes and the question relates to the expansion of Islamic conquests; that certain groups, the Qutbi ideology, the followers of Sayyid Qutb who was killed by the regime of Gamal Abd-an Nasir, they interpret Jihad as being offensive in all forms.

What they are confusing, is the offensive jihad that they refer to, in reality, is a form of defence. That if you look at all of the expeditions of the *Prophet* ﷺ, you will notice that the expeditions where they went out of the city of *alMadinah al Munawwarah*, to attack, looking at the background of those expeditions, you will note that those expeditions were in fact a form of defence; to remove any threat from rebellious groups or people who were intending to attack the city of *al Madinah al Munawwarah*. This is the background of every expedition. For this you can read *Fiqh as Sirah* of *Shaykh Ramadan al Bouti* (رحمه الله), available in English. There are multiple Arabic books written on this subject also. If you observe all the conquests, in reality they were all forms of defence. For instance, the conquest of Syria was because the Romans were threatening to invade the Arabian peninsula. They in fact sent envoys to threaten the city of al-Madinah, and the same with the envoys that were sent from the Persian empire; this goes for all the conquests. So, the purpose of the Islamic caliphate is not expansionism, as George Bush famously said, that these people want to expand from Indonesia to Spain and then into the rest of the world. Secondly, there is a problem in apocalyptic cults. Like the Christian world, the Muslims have their fair share of apocalyptic cults; some Christian groups like the Siege of Waco in Texas, and other groups, they made predictions of the end of times and armed resistance towards the governments. In the Muslim world, you had a similar problem; previously and in modern times. For instance, when Masjid al-Haram in Makkah was violated by Juhayman, who was a student of Nasir ad-Din Albani, even though Albani rejected his act, Juhayman claimed his friend was the *Mahdi*, and this was an apocalyptic mindset. In the same way groups today mention the conquering of Rome. The conquering of Rome is a prediction relating to the future of events that shall transpire. But what Muslims are not ordered to do is to make those events for themselves. This in fact is a Mu'tazili type of belief, an early sect that believe a person creates his own actions. We

believe these are predictions for the future that shall transpire without our doing. But these apocalyptic cults like ISIS and other groups, believe that they are drawing in the end of times, so they mention the conquering of different regions. Or for instance some people think the current wars are the wars of the end of times, or the wars of the Armageddon or the apocalypse, drawing in the apocalypse; these are things that we are prohibited from doing. So that doesn't help the problem.

The question is do we believe in gravity?

Gravity is something which is experiential, and experiential facts are not denied in **Islam**. Our claim would be that anything which is observable and empirical, we do not deny. So, if someone lifts an object and drops the object to the ground, the way **Allah** ﷻ has created the environment on Earth is that every object falls to the ground, this is a common sense fact. Scientists call this gravity, so we wouldn't say we believe in gravity, we would say that gravity is something forwarded by Isaac Newton, it's how we word things, but do we reject a point that everything falls to the ground? The answer would be that we do not reject empirical facts, and in fact no verse of the **Qur'an** should be interpreted as rejecting empirical acts. What non-Muslims tend to do is quote some verses of the **Qur'an** and then intend to confuse certain Muslims that the **Qur'an** is going against observable evidence or empirical facts, but the correct interpretation of those verses is never mentioned. For instance, when **Sayidduna Dhul-Qarnayn** (upon him be peace) went to the western part of the world, the **Qur'an** states he saw the sun setting in a muddy spring. They say from this, that the **Qur'an** is saying that the sun sets in a muddy spring. But the **Qur'an** is relating the vision of what **Dhul-Qarnayn** (رضى الله عنه) was able to see; he was looking at the horizon and he was observing the sun going down, it is not stating a scientific theory or fact. Your question also involved did a certain scholar believe in gravity or not; those questions are irrelevant because each individual scholar will have his own view on certain things, and people can quote those books of those particular scholars, but what we are binded to believe in is the consensus of the Muslim scholars; that is what we are obligated to believe in as Sunni Muslims.

The question relates to suffering; how as Muslims do we understand the suffering of children and animals, if the Creator is Merciful?

Christians term this theodicy, the problem of evil. Muslims do not find it difficult to explain, mainly due to the fact that **Allah** ﷻ has multiple names and attributes. The manifestation of those attributes is observed with multiple things; one of those is suffering, because He is the One who trials, the One who lowers people. So, Muslims do not say God is Merciful

only, no. We say the Creator also punishes, the Creator also trials. Secondly, the question cannot be answered without answering a question which relates to this which is, how do we understand the day of Judgement, how do we prove the day of Judgement? We would say that if the day of Judgement will not come about, then good and evil would be equal. For instance, Hitler, who was an evil man, killed millions of people and died, and then you have a person who did charitable work and did good works and died; would we say both of these are equal? We would say no, the two of them are different; so, on the day of Judgement, God will judge between these two. In the same way, when a child suffers, does a child only live in this world or will he face a hereafter also? The answer is that he will face a hereafter. This same child who suffered on earth will not be punished in the hereafter and will enter paradise without reckoning. So, this relates to the Divine knowledge; had God known that the child would grow up on earth, he would disbelieve and he would reject the message and will enter hell forever, so the child's life is taken young, and he ended up within the Divine mercy of **Allah** ﷻ. So, this is one example of how our limited knowledge cannot explain the Divine wisdom behind Divine judgements and Divine actions.

Is the Niqab an obligation on Muslim women?

The answer is no. The **Qur'an** does not mention the niqab. The **Qur'an** mentions the jilbab which is covering the breasts, the figure of the woman, and covering the hair; this is by agreement of the scholars. As for covering the face, it is proven from the **Sunnah**, the Prophetic way of the **Prophet** ﷺ, that his wives would cover their faces, and scholars mention a context that this is necessary where a person fears that the woman will go out and be harmed, therefore women would wear veils, in order that they not be harmed. But in this country if women are wearing veils and they may face a mob or a racist individual, a bigot, then in that case women are not obligated to wear face veils.

A person accepted **Islam**, and after accepting Islam, he wants to know whether he can supplicate for his mother who passed away prior to accepting **Islam**.

What he can supplicate for is that his mother may have been from those people who a messenger never reached. If that is the case then she would fall under the verse **'We will not punish until we send a Messenger'**. But he cannot specifically supplicate for her salvation if she died on disbelief, this would be impermissible.

The question relates to the truthfulness of the Qur'an.

Firstly, our response to Atheists is not in order to revert them to Islam. Our response is to show that our faith is rational, our faith is not a blind faith. Secondly, the subject relating to the truthfulness of the **Qur'an** relates to the fact that the **Prophet** ﷺ was not taught how to read and write by any human being. Orientalists attempt to reject this fact; they say how can a man who traded and lived in the upper-class society of Quraysh at the time be unable to read and write, but the answer is that many people were not taught how to read and write. With the **Prophet** ﷺ we would say that the **Prophet** ﷺ was not taught by any human being to read and write. Thirdly, the contents of the **Qur'an** relate to its miraculous nature, how is the **Qur'an** miraculous? The Qur'an is miraculous in the context of how it was revealed, how it was compiled, and how it was preserved, the effect it had on humanity. For example, any nation that develops itself and reaches a peak in civilisation does so from its own effort; if you look at the Chinese, an ancient civilisation, a group of people that work hard with effort in order to attain material wealth and worldly fortunes, and they have attained greatness. The same with the Russians, the same with the Europeans, the same with the Americans, the same with most of the nations of the World. But when we look at the Arabs, prior to the revelation of the **Qur'an**, the Arabs were such people that they would bury their daughters alive, this is known, they would kill one another continuously, meaning tribes would fight one another endlessly. In this context, they had not given any contributions to civilisation. With the revelation of the Qur'an, within 100 years, they had an Empire greater than the Roman Empire, greater than the Persian Empire, greater than any civilisation in that time. How was this achievable by an Arab nation that was backwards, and had no contributions to civilisation? We would claim that this was solely by the revelation of the **Qur'an**. This is one example, but this deserves a totally different lecture regarding the miraculous aspect of the **Qur'an**.

Tackling Atheism

3 Propositions for Atheists to Consider

This is a message for the atheists to consider certain propositions before discussing with a Muslim. Now those propositions are:

- That we cannot have something coming into existence simply because of the principle of determination, what do we mean by the principle of determination? If there are two options, A and B, existence and non-existence, someone would have had to come along and chosen existence over non-existence and therefore we exist. So, this is the first proposition and it would be very logical to any Muslim theologian and layman.
- The impossibility of continuous regress. By continuous regress we mean that something is caused by something else - so A is caused by B, and then B is caused by C, and then C is caused by D, ad infinitum, forever - this, Muslim theologians would say, is an impossibility.
- The impossibility of circular reasoning. If we say A caused B and B caused A and therefore A caused B, or for instance if we said A caused B, B caused C and C caused A. This would be something rationally impossible.

These three things are very important for any atheist willing to debate a Muslim theologian to refute. Either you agree with these three propositions, and if you do, the debate can go ahead. If you decide to disagree with these propositions, either the propositions are debated in of themselves, or you reach an impasse in the debate where it would not continue.

16 Fallacies to Avoid when Discussing Religious Texts

The following is a favour for the atheists on my behalf, when discussing with Muslims, and also for Muslims when discussing with Christians and Christians when discussing with Muslims. 16 Fallacies to avoid when discussing religious texts, especially when discussing Islam and the Muslims, the Qur'an and the Hadith.

- **Generalising a statement which is specific.** Many times, we hear people recite a verse of the *Qur'an* or a *hadith*, a Prophetic narration from the *Prophet of Islam* ﷺ, and the statement may be specific but they will generalise the statement to make a point.

- **Avoid specifying something general.** That if a statement is general, do not try to specify that statement.

- **Additions which are not in the general text.** Meaning, sometimes atheists will add additions from what they understand regarding the text, without resorting to the real understanding of the actual text.

- **Hiding conditions and limits which change the context.** Sometimes a text of the *Qur'an* will have limits and conditions, but the atheist will either be ignorant of those, or will purposefully refrain from mentioning those limits and conditions of the text. This is sometimes also done by Muslims when quoting the Bible, or Christians when quoting the *Qur'an*, this should be avoided.

- **Using quotes without the previous or following text.** Meaning decontextualising the actual text. Many times, when people quote verses of jihad, or slavery in the *Qur'an*, they do not mention the verse prior or after the verse they are quoting. Remember the verses of jihad are different to the passages in the Old Testament which mention killing. The passages in the Old Testament may be quoted in context and will still seem violent, but when the passages of the *Qur'an* are quoted in context, they will not be perceived as being violent.

- **Playing with the meaning of the text to establish a point.** Sometimes a person may start playing with the meaning in order to make a point, which is also a fallacy to avoid.

- **A straw-man argument.** Sometimes, a person may have perceptions of Muslims, Islam or the *Qur'an*, and they will make a straw-man argument, a false argument, and refute or destroy that argument. For instance, claiming that Muslims have x position and attempt to destroy that position, when in reality, if a person looks into Islam, they will realise the Muslims did not hold that position in the first place.

- **Using a mistaken opinion of a scholar of Islam.** So, sometimes people may quote from a valid Islamic book, but the position of that scholar will be mistaken. Because as Muslims, and Muslim theologians especially, we will only take seriously those positions which are consensus-based positions, which, in *Islam*, is called *Ijma'*. If the position is a consensus-based position, they will accept that.

- **Using positions of a sect.** So, within *Islam* there are many sects, sometimes an atheist or a Christian may quote the position of a sect in Islam as opposed to the consensus of the Muslims, and refute the position of that particular sect. Again, this is a fallacy.

- **Texts attributed without verifying.** For instance, many Muslims, even Peter Kreeft in his book 'Socratic Logic', copy a narration which presupposes that Umar - Allah be well pleased with him - burnt the library of Alexandria, yet on verification we find that this narration was recorded by historians 600 years after the conquest of Egypt, without any chain of narration, yet people, such as Orientalists and others, pass this narration off as truthful.

- **Hiding of valid texts, or ignorance of valid texts.** For instance, if there is a *hadith*, or a verse of the *Qur'an* which will seem to be in favour of Muslims on a given situation, in this day and age political situations, some atheists or Christians may attempt to hide that *hadith*, or will be very ignorant of that *hadith* or verse of the *Qur'an*.

- A fallacy specific to atheists, **that science is based upon atheism**. This is a fallacy also. The scientific foundations of the scientific community are not atheistic and neither are religious. In fact, science is something general to all of humanity.

- **The red-herring or side-issues fallacy.** If we discuss jihad, or slavery in the *Qur'an*, or the marriage of A'isha - Allah be well pleased with her - to the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) and her age, when we stick to that specific issue in our discussion, the atheist may bring up another issue. Or if we discuss the existence of God, the atheist may bring up jihad in the *Qur'an*, when the two issues are not related. So, when discussing with a Muslim, stick to the issue that is being debated, unless there is an actual link between that issue.

- **Appeal to popularity or authority.** This is common amongst all groups. Sometimes, they may appeal to popularity of a given position, even though, on closer investigation, we will find that the popular opinion is untrue. For instance, the popular opinion that Islam is violence, because the media shows violent images from the Middle East, therefore the popular opinion in the west is that Islam is violent. This argument carries no water, simply based on the fact that it is a fallacy.

- **Misusing words.** For instance, sometimes atheists will not make a distinction between belief and superstition. In Islam however, belief must be based upon reason. So, when misusing words, and not making a distinction between two different concepts, when it comes to Islam, you are not discussing with Christians. For instance, in Christianity, faith is not necessarily based upon reason, but in Islam real belief is based upon knowledge and reason. If a person does not have faith based upon reason and knowledge, he is sinful for doing so in Islam.

- Lastly, *not making a distinction between mutawatir, mass transmitted hadith*, and hadith which are narrated by single narrators.

So, these are 16 fallacies that I have mentioned, in fact, and there can be many others.

Why does God Allow the Possibility of Evil and Suffering?

The subject for today is to discuss the problem of evil, meaning this is something which people will deem as a problem, if it is in relation to the divine will, so they will term the divine will relating to something as being evil, therefore evil, we would say, is subjective. Depending on the person describing something as being evil, or what is being described as evil, the very definition of evil would be subjective. But, the subject is explaining the divine actions of **Allah** ﷻ to the rational mind; how does one reconcile faith, iman, with the presence of evil? Of course, this discussion is not something new; in the past, theologians debated many subjects, one of the famous debates in history was the debate of the creation of the Qur'an. The Mu'tazilites, an early sect, believed the *Qur'an* is a creation of **Allah** ﷻ while *Ahlus-sunnah* held the position that the Qur'an is the Divine speech of **Allah** ﷻ. In the same way, they debated human actions and human free will. That a human being has the free will to do certain actions, to acquire good deeds or the acquisition of bad deeds. This discussion continued even to our times today, where people found it difficult to reconcile with the modern mind, how does one reconcile *al-qada wal-qadr*, the Divine will with the free will of the human being, that the human being has a free will. So, some of them attempted to explain this by saying outwardly, a human being is free to do what he wants, but inwardly, he is being forced to do what God ordains for him. This, we can call a soft-determinism. Determinism meaning the path is laid out for someone, already determined for them, without a choice, whether to choose evil or good. But soft-determinism would be that outwardly the person has a choice, but inwardly the path has already been defined for him. Now, this soft determinism was forwarded by so many scholars in order to interpret those verses of the *Qur'an*, the outward of which would mean that human beings are coerced into actions, like the verse **'It is not what you will, but it is only what Allah wills'**, does this mean that the human being has no free will of his own? Of course, the correct interpretation is that the meaning is that **Allah** ﷻ has created for the human being a free will. So, in order to explain the verses of the *Qur'an*, the outward of which would remove free will, some scholars forwarded soft-determinism; that outwardly the person has free will but inwardly he has no free will. Of course, this is incorrect, because the correct position is that the human being has free will, but that free will is an ability created by **Allah** ﷻ, what we call a *malaka*, like intelligence or anything else which is granted to a human being. Freedom, *ikhtiyar*, choice, and *iradah*, will, is something given to the human being, and at the same time the human being has the choice of *kasab*, the acquisition of good deeds. Of course, this relates to the problem of evil because when people discuss evil, they also discuss choice, meaning does the human being have free choice to do something.

What is the meaning of *al-Qada wal-Qadr*. We always hear the words al-qada and al-qadr, even in *Iman mufassal and mujmal*, which we memorise; the qadr, which is translated as

predestination, its good and its bad, its evil is from **Allah** ﷻ. So, this is the discussion, that whatever is evil in the world, we say it is al-qadr, its good and its bad. So, what people find difficult reconciling with their belief, is why do we have evil willed by **Allah** ﷻ? So, here we would have to make a distinction between iradah of **Allah**, divine will of **Allah**, and rida of **Allah**, pleasure of **Allah** ﷻ. The will of **Allah** is whatever He has created, meaning He has willed for something to exist. But, rida of **Allah** ﷻ are those things in creation with which **Allah** ﷻ is pleased. For instance, Zayd has a choice of praying his salah, his prayer, and he prays his prayer. When he prays, it is an action which he has acquired, kasab. This acquisition is with the irada of **Allah**, **Allah** ﷻ has willed for him to pray and has created that action for him when he chose to do it. But, if Zayd decides not to pray, **Allah** ﷻ gave him the freedom of choice to make that choice, so from this aspect it is iradah of Allah that **Allah** has given him the choice, and created the ability to choose within him, but the rida of **Allah** ﷻ is not in this action; that Allah ﷻ is not pleased with Zayd for having made this choice. So, we would make a distinction between *rida and iradah*.

So, here *al-qada and al-qadr*, what distinction do we make between these two words? *Al-qada* we would say is the Divine knowledge of **Allah** ﷻ regarding everything. *Al-qadr* is the manifestation of those things. So, if **Allah** ﷻ knows that Zayd, throughout his life, will eat 20,000 chapattis, this is qada of **Allah** ﷻ. When Zayd is born, on Monday, as he grows older - obviously once he starts eating solids - he eats one chapatti, on Tuesday he eats three, on Wednesday he eats four, on Thursday he goes back to one; like this, throughout his life he eats numerous chapattis and dies, and throughout his life the number of chapattis that were known that he would eat is qada of **Allah** ﷻ, and the manifestation of those chapattis was *al-qadr*. So, this is the distinction between *al-qada and al-qadr*.

But, the human being has kasab, which is acquisition. *Al-kasab* is the ability created within a human being to choose between right and wrong. We are not discussing those actions which a human being has no choice in; if you were born into a particular family, you had no choice to be born into that family. But, of course, the problem of evil will relate to the questions which we are going to ask, regarding milieu, the environment which you are born in, whether that effects your choice or not. But a person will not be asked regarding those things in which he has no choice. He will be asked regarding al-kasab, those things that he acquired; whatever he did after having sanity, maturity, the message of Islam reaching him - because **Allah** ﷻ states **'We shall not punish until we send a Messenger'** - when all these things have reached a person, meaning a person has intellect, adulthood and the message of Islam reaches that person, he has the choice of acquisition, he chooses to do good and he will be judged according to that. So, this is known as *al-kasab*.

At this point people ask regarding the purpose of life, because it is intricately attached to the problem of evil; people ask the question:

Why did Allah ﷻ create Shaytan, Iblis if he knew he would disbelieve? Why did Allah ﷻ create Fir'awn if he knew he would disbelieve? How would a person counter this objection?

The response would be that whatever **Allah** ﷻ granted them, which was life itself, freedom, intellect and the divine message reaching them - for instance Fir'awn meeting someone as great as **Musa** (upon him be peace), and the miracles at the hand of **Musa** (upon him be peace) - all these favours of Allah ﷻ are a gift given to someone like Fir'awn; the only thing expected from Fir'awn was to choose to know **Allah** ﷻ. Even though **Allah** ﷻ states in the **Qur'an**, 'I did not create Jinn and humankind except to worship me', even though worship is mention, it is a means to knowing **Allah** ﷻ; all that was needed from Fir'awn was to recognise his Creator. So, the favours given to Fir'awn were greater than anything, and all that was expected from him was to believe in **Allah** ﷻ. So, anyone coming into existence, their very existence is a greater favour from **Allah** ﷻ, but when they choose to go to hell, is it something determined for them or that they choose to do? It is something that they choose to do. **Allah** ﷻ knowing that they will choose disbelief does not mean that **Allah** ﷻ has coerced them into going to hell. The Divine attribute of knowledge, *al-Ilm* is sifa kashifa, an attribute which uncovers realities, but it is not sifa mu'atthira, something that has an effect on things, unlike *alqudra*, the Divine power which affects things. So, **Allah** ﷻ knowing Zayd will choose to go to hell does not mean that hell was determined for Zayd, meaning that he was forced to go to hell, Zayd made that choice for himself. So, this is how we respond to this objection of purpose of life which so many people ask, that why did **Allah** ﷻ create us. Of course, I've mentioned this in many lectures, that children are an exception, insane people are an exception, people whom the message of Islam did not reach are an exception, so therefore all those people are excluded from the concept of taklif, meaning legally obligated to believe in Allah ﷻ. So, the person in effect who is asking, is a person who has reached maturity, he has intellect and the message of Islam reaches him, and such a person asks: '*Why did Allah ﷻ create me?*' That person should know that He created you by giving you all these favours, and all He expects of you is that you know Him, *ma'rifah*, to accept him which is **Iman**, belief. But, if the person makes the choice of disbelief, that choice he has made himself, it was not compelled, he was not forced to make that choice, so there is no determinism in this regard. In the way non-Muslims believe when we say **In shaa Allah** for instance, some people think saying it means that the human being has no choice; but the correct meaning of **In Shaa Allah** is that **Allah** ﷻ shall make the asbab, the means, so if I say I will travel from Leicester to Birmingham, and I say **In Shaa Allah**, the correct meaning is that Allah ﷻ creates for me the asbab, the means, by which I have the ability to walk out the masjid, I have the ability to sit in the vehicle, the vehicle is working and takes us through the motorway. But, if **Allah** ﷻ does not will for these asbab to be made, then there will be a disruption in any one of the asbab. So, this is the meaning of **In Shaa Allah**, meaning it is not a determinism in the sense that non-Muslims understand. Of course, there are things which we have no choice, like 'when is my time of death?'. But some people misunderstand this, that if Bakr decides to kill Zayd, when Bakr places a knife in the heart of Zayd, **Allah** ﷻ has created within the knife the ability to pierce the heart of Zayd and the sharpness of the blade which is retained and sustained by Allah ﷻ at every given moment. The meaning of Allah ﷻ willed this is that Allah ﷻ created the asbab, the means; the freedom of choice for Bakr to go and kill Zayd, the sharpness of the knife, the acquisition of stabbing by Bakr, and when the knife pierces the heart of Zayd and the blood pours out, **Allah** ﷻ commanding the Angel of Death to take the soul of Zayd. This is what is meant by the will of **Allah**, but does this mean Bakr did not have a choice,

that he did not have free will? The answer is no, Bakr did have free will and that free will is also created by **Allah** ﷻ. So, these are a few things relating to the purpose of life and taklif, but there is also the question which people ask regarding the levels of intellect and the milieu, the environment in which a person grows up. So, you have a child born to a woman who is an opium addict, or a crack addict, and that woman is abused by multiple men, and this child grows up observing this action being done to his mother, this affects the child's mental state. That child grows up as a non-Muslim with numerous ills within society; the question people ask is why is such a child going to hell, growing up in such an environment? The response is that when we say Muslims are going to paradise and disbelievers are going to hell, this is by summary without going into specifics. Meaning those who are believers in **Allah** ﷻ, they will go to paradise, those who are disbelievers will go to hell, this is by way of summary. But, when we start going into specifics and individuals, the issue becomes grey. The judgement of **Allah** ﷻ is explicit in that anyone who is a disbeliever will go to hell, what becomes grey is when we speak regarding an individual. So, outwardly, a person can seem Muslim, because he was born in a Muslim family, but inwardly if he disbelieves and dies upon disbelief, we will say he died as a Muslim because we observed him proclaiming Islam, but on the day of Judgement he may be resurrected as a disbeliever because inwardly he was a disbeliever, and vice versa; where there was a disbeliever, but due to certain circumstances he was unable to proclaim his Islam, outwardly when he dies we say he was a disbeliever but on the day of Judgement he is resurrected as a disbeliever. But, in the worldly life we are ordered not to pray the funerals of disbelievers, not to supplicate for them, this is a ruling relating to fiqh. But **Allah** ﷻ has Divine knowledge of every individual, uniquely for that individual. So, that child born to a mother who was a crack addict and he saw abuse in his childhood, or a child was abused, and that affected their choice when they become adults, that unique person will be judged by **Allah** ﷻ due to his circumstances, meaning did that upbringing impede his understanding of Islam? So, this is a unique case; even then if he remains a disbeliever and dies, we give the worldly judgement that he is a disbeliever, we do not pray his funeral and we do not supplicate for him. However, on the day of Judgement, **Allah** ﷻ will be the one to judge the uniqueness of his case. So, of course, this comes down to the verse 'We will not punish a people until we send a Messenger', so the messenger did not reach the peasants in the Middle Ages within England, and they did not hear of Islam; some people had short lives that they died very young, such people will fall under the category of those whom the message has not reached. Of course, we are not discussing people today, who hear, understand and can check what Islam is and still refuse, those are people whom the message of **Islam** has reached. We are discussing the grey issue which some people find very difficult to explain that leads them to the extreme of declaring every non-Muslim as falling into the grey area. But, the grey area is a very unique category of people that the judgement of **Allah** ﷻ is what will judge them, but we are ordered to declare them as disbelievers based upon the outward. Of course, this relates to the problem of evil because someone would say an orphan child who is brought up in a home witnesses so many abuses in his or her life, as an adult this will affect their mind and their choice of accepting Islam or not. The response to that is that the worldly judgement would be that he is a disbeliever, but on the day of Judgement **Allah** ﷻ who is Just, will judge that individual uniquely.

So, from this, we move onto the issue of what is determined as being evil, which in classical theology they refer to as al husn wal-qubh. Al-husn is the beauty of something, al-qubh is looking at the ugliness of something, how is something determined as being good or bad? The

Mu'tazilites, an early sect, believed that bad and good is determined by the intellect, so the aql is sufficient in determining something to be bad. Whilst **Ahl as-Sunnah walJama'ah** said that the Divine revelation is what determines what is good and bad, the reason being that some things are susceptible to change; for instance, killing is bad, but killing in self-defence is not bad. In protecting a child, if someone kills a thief who attempts to kill a child, his action was not bad, whilst killing itself is bad. So, this concept of good and bad is susceptible to change, so who is the one who determines what is good for us? The only one who can determine what is good for us is the Divine Creator, Allah ﷻ. At the same time, the **Ahl as sunnah** within themselves, had a linguistic dispute regarding good and bad; but the main difference between them and the Mu'tazilites was that the ahl as-sunnah said, when the intellect determines something being good and bad, which it can in numerous cases, what they mean by **Allah** ﷻ being the One to tell us what is good and bad is knowing whether or not a person is punished for this bad action in the hereafter, how can we tell whether a person is punished in the hereafter for a bad action? The only way of knowing is through Divine law, so this was the main difference between the Mu'tazilites and **Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah**. So, **Ahl as sunnah** did not totally negate the intellect, they accepted the judgement based on the intellect in many things, but they said to know whether punishment or reward is attained from knowing what is good and bad, the person must rely on Shariah which is Divine revelation. So therefore, when people say, 'Why does evil exist', how do they define evil, and evil itself will be categorised in two ways: there is that evil which is acquired by human beings, meaning when Bakr decided to kill Zayd, he was the person who carried out that evil action, how do we know it's evil? We know through the Shari'ah, because **Allah** ﷻ told us killing is impermissible, therefore Bakr killing Zayd is an action which is impermissible. The second category is those things that humans do not have choice in, or any acquisition, which people call the evil of natural disasters, pestilence, hunger, famine, human suffering, illnesses - why do these things exist? So, this is a second aspect of what people call evil. So, in order to determine whether or not these things are in fact evil, what we first decide upon is that the one who informs us what evil is, is **Allah** ﷻ the human intellect is insufficient, it cannot know whether a particular thing denotes a reward or punishment in the Hereafter.

So, with regard to human actions, a person may say, *why does Allah ﷻ not intervene when Bakr killed Zayd?*

Of course, we would say, so many times in human history **Allah** ﷻ has intervened within the choice of human beings, that if He did not intervene, the world would not exist the way we observe it. Look how many nuclear weapons there are, if it were totally a human decision to use nuclear weapons, they would have been launched on one country to another, but it is **Allah** ﷻ who has kept us safe. But, if **Allah** ﷻ intervened at every point of evil which humans do, they would no longer have taklif, an obligation of following Shari'ah, and neither would they have freedom of choice in any matter. Of course, what gives nobility to the children of Adam is the fact that they have desires, and they choose to go against those base desires, this is the meaning of taklif. If someone was generous, their generosity would not be praiseworthy if they did not have to fight the ego against stinginess. So, human beings are created with two desires of each type, so if he has generosity he has stinginess, if he has bravery he has a cowardly trait also. So, therefore, the human being has the choice to fight the opposite desire, based on which **Allah** ﷻ has told us that a day of Judgement will come when the choices will be judged. So, when Bakr killed Zayd, it is wrong for an individual to base his judgement upon the killing of Zayd solely on the action of

killing without looking at the day of Judgement itself, because it will show the entire picture; the divine wisdom behind each action, maybe at the point Zayd was killed, if he had lived longer, he may have killed Bakr, so there are so many factors to look at. But, the main response is from the **Qur'an: 'Allah ﷻ is not asked regarding what He does, but the creation is asked'** meaning the human code of conduct and ethics is not a way of judging **Allah ﷻ**, and this is one of the major flaws of the Christian doctrine; because the Christians have declared Jesus as a man-god and therefore have made God anthropomorphic. So, because Jesus is God according to the Christians, they would judge God according to human standards. But, in Islam **Allah ﷻ** tells us 'He is not asked regarding what He does, but they are asked regarding what they do'. This, of course, tells us that everything that exists around us belongs to **Allah ﷻ**. So, if a person says, 'Why did **Allah ﷻ** make me blind?' The sight that the person had in the first place belonged to **Allah ﷻ**; for Allah is what He gave and for Him is what he took, meaning the eyesight belongs to **Allah ﷻ**, Him taking away the eyesight, he is not asked regarding, meaning he is not judged by human beings. Secondly, we know **Allah ﷻ** says 'The doer of what He wills', so **Allah ﷻ** is not compelled, unlike the Mu'tazilite belief who claimed that things are good or bad in of themselves, due to the innate nature of that thing, therefore they said **Allah's ﷻ** actions are in accordance with what is good; this would mean, in effect, that **Allah ﷻ** is doing his Divine actions in accordance with what is good, and that goodness itself is dictating to Allah ﷻ what to do. But, the correct belief is that goodness is something created by Allah ﷻ, not the other way around; goodness does not dictate to **Allah ﷻ** what to do, but **Allah ﷻ** is the Creator of good and evil. So, this is the meaning of 'The Doer of what He wills'. Thirdly, we know regarding the names of **Allah ﷻ** like Allah ﷻ has the name **ad-Daar**, the One who gives harm. So, if **Allah ﷻ** manifests Himself with harming creation, this does not do away with His justice. Some may ask *isn't this oppression from Allah that he harms?* The answer is no because the very meaning of oppression is taking something away from someone else, that does not belong to you; if you kill someone, you took away a life that does not belong to you, if you beat someone, you took away a right that does not belong to you, if you took away wealth from someone, you took something that did not belong to you. This very meaning cannot apply to **Allah ﷻ** because everything belongs to **Allah ﷻ**. So, if **Allah ﷻ** decides that Zayd will die, then **Allah ﷻ** taking the life of Zayd cannot be described as oppression because the life of Zayd belonged to **Allah ﷻ**. **Allah ﷻ** taking away the eyesight of Bakr cannot be termed as being oppression because the eyesight belongs to **Allah ﷻ** in the first place. So, this is the meaning of 'the Doer of what He wills', and what we observe around us is a manifestation of the Divine names of **Allah ﷻ** like **ad-Daar**, the one who harms, **al-khaafidh**, the one who lowers, **alMudhil** the one who disgraces, **al-Mui'zz**, the one who gives respect. So, these are the manifestations of the Divine names and attributes of **Allah ﷻ**.

If **Allah ﷻ** did not create evil on earth, so many human beings today would claim to be Divine. They say regarding Fir'awn, if you read some of the commentaries of the Qur'an, that throughout his life he never suffered even a headache, until the Divine punishment came upon him, this led him to thinking of himself as being Divine. So, this human being, if he was left unrestrained, he would start deeming himself as being Divine, like the founder of the Rasta religion in Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, they believe in a triune and he claimed divinity. In the same way, so many other people like Wallace D who inspired Elijah Poole, the founder of Nation of **Islam**, claiming divinity, and of course they believe in an anthropomorphic god, a god who is like a man. So, some human beings are such that if they face no problems and evil, they will at worst claim to be god almighty,

and less than that will become very arrogant. So, **Allah** ﷻ created things around us in such a way that an animal as huge as an elephant or a horse we are able to subjugate, yet a mosquito will give us malaria and a human being can die. A lion lives far in the jungle from the human beings, yet the fly will come and fly around our faces, poke us and annoy us, we will be unable to remove the fly. Remember, lions and tigers live away from the cities and humans. So, **Allah** ﷻ created pestilence and disease to show human beings their limit. Also, if we talk regarding earthquakes, the number of earthquakes that occur in comparison to the earth being still is minute, yet from time to time **Allah** ﷻ causes the tectonic plates to move, causing the earth to shake and people to die and suffer, to show human beings their limitations. Those children who die will go to paradise; of course, you cannot categorise children as non-Muslim, but we say born into Muslim or non-Muslim families.

The next response to the problem of evil is that If **Allah** ﷻ had not created these evil things on earth, human beings would be attached to this worldly life; when they face the Angel of Death they will respond that they do not want to live this worldly life, because they are attached. So, **Allah** ﷻ has created the world in such a way that within it we have illnesses, shortcomings, diseases, pestilence, famines and so many different things that Allah ﷻ tells the people to not become attached to this worldly life. If you become attached to the worldly life, you would want to live on this short-lived world forever. But, when **Allah** ﷻ has given you the rational faculty, freedom of choice and the religion of Islam, and if you are confused regarding some aspects of Islam, He has given you access to knowledge, you have the choice of knowing Allah ﷻ or turning away from Him. This also takes us onto another aspect which relates to *sunan Allah fi-al kawn*. By this we mean the laws that **Allah** ﷻ has placed in the universe. If you recite the Qur'an on a regular basis, you will find so many verses of the Qur'an which mention those laws. For example, **Allah** ﷻ states 'Whoever we give age to, their bodily functions decrease' meaning they are unable to do certain things, that they are not able to live forever on earth. There are different sunan of **Allah** ﷻ, like if someone commits oppression, **Allah** ﷻ shall punish them, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. If people do not repent regarding the sins of harming other creatures of **Allah** ﷻ, He shall punish them. So, some of the outcomes of our sins we observe in what some people call the problem of evil. So, for instance, if Zayd steals 50,000 pounds from a widow, and forgets. After 20 years, he has businesses, homes, children and grandchildren, but one-day, Zayd has severe cancer, but he has forgot that he took 50,000 pounds of inheritance from a widow, so he complains 'Why does **Allah** ﷻ make us suffer from disease', but he does not realise that **Allah** ﷻ has given him that cancer in order to remove that sin which he did against that widow. So, there could be numerous reasons as to why things happen, yet there is another sunna of **Allah** ﷻ that if your sins do not relate to the rights of other creatures, **Allah** ﷻ forgives the sins if you ask forgiveness. Meaning, Bakr had shortcomings with the rights of **Allah** ﷻ throughout his life, but he repents - he's in a room and says 'Oh Allah whatever shortcomings I have between me and you, meaning I drank alcohol, I harmed myself, I committed fornication, I harmed myself - as long as he did not commit fornication with a married woman or the rights of another individual were not taken away - I committed other sins but they did not involve the rights of others, like abandoning the prayers' and he does repentance, tauba, **Allah** ﷻ will accept his repentance. But, if his sins relate to the rights of human beings, he would have to repair those wrongs that he did with other human beings. If Muslims stop giving Zakah, charity, **Allah** ﷻ withdraws the rain from them. So, a person living in a Muslim country thinks why does the rain stop in a Muslim country whilst in Europe they have

regular rain, this is because of *Sunnat-Allah fil kawn* that Allah ﷻ has told us, in the *hadith* it is mentioned that when Muslims stop giving Zakat, Allah ﷻ will withhold the rain. In the same way, if zina - adultery and fornication, and riba - usury and interest, if these two sins appear amongst Muslims, Allah ﷻ will punish them, a punishment which can take many forms individually or communally, depending on the type of sin. These types of sin or actions which have a result are referred to as *sunanAllah fil-kawn*. An example of a *hadith* which covers this sufficiently, is a *hadith* narrated by *Mughirah ibn Shu'ba* (Allah be pleased with him) that the *Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) said, as related by *Daylami* in '*Musnad al-Firdaws*', ***'The punishments shall never cease to be removed as long as they hide their sins'*** (that they do not sin openly, because sins will always occur because human beings are not perfect - Allah ﷻ states, ***'the human being has been created weak'*** - but the *sunnah* of Allah ﷻ is that the punishment is never swift, with the exception of a few cases not mentioned here, as long as they hide their sins out of modesty and repentance to Allah ﷻ.) 'When they openly sin, they obligate upon themselves the punishment of Allah'. So, this is an example of *sunnat-Allah fil-kaw* (سنت الله في الكون), that if Muslims sin but hide their sins and repent to Allah ﷻ and are not harming the rights of other creatures Allah ﷻ will not punish them. But, if you sin openly then Allah ﷻ shall punish you. So, there are so many facets to what people call the problem of evil relating to rulers, governments and the political affairs of the Muslim world and economy. When it comes to analysing the Muslim world, a Muslim should look at *sunan-Allah fil-kawn*, what are the laws Allah ﷻ has mentioned in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, and also the laws relating to non-Muslims and humanity as a whole, these laws are found throughout the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ

After this, we know Allah ﷻ says, ***'It is perhaps that you dislike something yet it is good for you'*** and Allah ﷻ says, ***'Perhaps you may like a thing, but it is bad for you, Allah knows and you do not know'***, so this relates to the Divine knowledge of Allah ﷻ which is the Divine knowledge relating to everything around us. The human mind has limitations, attempting to understand the entire universe and everything that takes place with the limited mind, the human being is unable to comprehend the existence of evil and why it exists amongst us. So, these are some of the discussions that I wanted to cover today regarding the problem of evil. May Allah ﷻ remove any punishment from us, forgive our sins, make ease for Ummah of the *Messenger of Allah* ﷺ, restore peace in the Muslim lands, restore peace among human beings generally, enable Muslims to look after the environment around them - this is one evil of human doing that corruption has occurred in the seas and not on the earth with the acquisition of what human hands have done - so the corruption of pollution, polluting the seas, rivers, making nuclear weapons and nuclear waste, all this is from human hands, and these are the types of things that we should supplicate to Allah ﷻ that He enables this Ummah to be an Ummah which restores peace in the world, restores justice and mercy in this world and restores love in this world.